

# **IOWA BIRD LIFE**

IOWA ORNITHOLOGISTS' UNION



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# IOWA BIRD LIFE

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*The Iowa Ornithologists' Union, founded in 1923, encourages interest in the identification, study, and protection of birds in Iowa and seeks to unite those who have these interests in common. Iowa Bird Life and IOU News are quarterly publications of the Union.*

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**FRONT COVER:** Krider's Red-tailed Hawk, Jester Park, Saylorville Res., Polk Co., 17 Oct 2004. Photograph by Jay Gilliam, Norwalk, IA.

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# What Was That Brown Blur? Tips for Identifying Taiga and Prairie Merlin Races

Jay Gilliam



Jay Gilliam

My first few encounters with a Merlin (*Falco columbarius*) were similar to those of many other Iowa birders and usually involved the phrase “What was that brown blur?” as the bird rocketed by at an amazing speed. I was finally able to get my first extended views of perched birds after the discovery that several Merlins were using Glendale Cemetery in Des Moines as a communal roosting site during the winter of 2004 (Cecil 2004). The Merlins would arrive shortly before sunset and perch in the tops of deciduous trees to preen and digest their meals, sometimes for up to an hour, before flying down into the conifers for the night. The Glendale Merlins provided great opportunities to study the fieldmarks of adults and juveniles of two Merlin subspecies for long periods of time and on multiple occasions.



All of the subspecies of Merlin exhibit sexual dimorphism, with the females being larger than the males.

Adult male and female Merlins also exhibit differences in coloration and markings so sex determination is usually straightforward. Aging them can become tricky, because juveniles strongly resemble adult females, but this can be done accurately before the adult female molts in the fall. Additionally, race identification can be difficult in areas where their ranges overlap because intergrades do occur.

In general, two subspecies of Merlins occur in Iowa: the Prairie Merlin (*F. c. richardsonii*) and the Taiga Merlin (*F. c. columbarius*). Prairie Merlins average slightly larger and heavier than Taiga Merlins. Prairies also have an overall paler appearance than Taigas. Taiga Merlins can be dark or pale types, with the darkest individuals in the East and a gradual cline to paler individuals westward (Wheeler and Clark 2001). Sibley (2000) states that occasional Taiga birds from the East resemble the Pacific/Black Merlin (*F. c. suckleyii*), a subspecies not known to occur in Iowa. Each subspecies and sex of Merlin has certain fieldmarks that can be useful for identification. A great reference for details on the various traits is *Raptors of Western North America* (Wheeler 2003).

Adult females and juveniles are nearly identical in plumage but the state of the molt can be useful in determining age. Adult Merlins retain their summer plumage well into fall (November) so will have older, faded, and worn feathers when compared to juveniles of the same subspecies. After the adults molt into fresh plumage though, age determination can become difficult because juveniles do not complete their first molt until the following spring and thus will strongly resemble the adults. Wheeler and Clark (1995) state juvenile and adult female Taiga Merlins can be differentiated by the uppertail coverts because juvenile birds lack the grayish cast on the coverts that is seen in adult females. Use caution with this fieldmark though because variations in lighting can cause the

**Table 1. Traits of adult Prairie and Taiga Merlins of both sexes**

<div></div> <div></div>		
FEATURE	TAIGA MALE (A) <sup>a</sup>	TAIGA FEMALE (B)
CROWN	Slate-blue	Medium to dark brown
AURICULARS	Medium bluish-gray	Medium brown
NAPE	Slate-blue with white or tawny mottling	Dark brown with tawny mottling
BODY, DORSAL	Medium bluish-gray back, scapulars, and rump	Medium brown back and scapulars; grayish rump
BODY, VENTRAL	Tawny or tawny-rufous Heavily streaked dark brown	Uniform tawny or white Heavily streaked dark brown
LEG FEATHERS	Rufous	Tawny or white
WINGS, DORSAL	Medium bluish-gray Blackish primaries Outer webs of inner primaries have small bluish-gray spots	Medium brown Dark brown primaries Outer webs of inner primaries have small, pale tawny spots
WINGS, VENTRAL	Black flight feathers have small white spots	Brownish-black flight feathers have small tawny spots
TAIL	Black Two or three sharply-defined narrow bluish-gray bands Wide subterminal band is black	Medium to dark brown Two or three narrow defined pale tawny or grayish bands Wide subterminal band is blackish-brown

<sup>a</sup>Glendale Cemetery (Polk Co.) Merlin subspecies photographed by Jay Gilliam, Norwalk, IA. (A) 15 Jan 2004, (B) 1 Jan 2004, (C) 22 Mar 2004, (D) 22 Mar 2004.



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**PRAIRIE MALE (C)**

Pale bluish-gray

Medium brown

Pale bluish-gray with  
whitish or tawny mottling

Pale bluish-gray back,  
scapulars, and rump

Whitish  
Reddish-brown streaks

Pale tawny-rufous

Bluish-gray  
Blackish primaries  
Outer webs of all primaries  
have large bluish-gray spots

Black flight feathers have  
large white spots

Black  
Three to four wide whitish  
or light gray bands  
Wide subterminal band  
is black



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**PRAIRIE FEMALE (D)**

Pale brown

Whitish

Pale brown extensively  
mottled with white

Pale brown back and scapulars,  
each feather neatly edged  
with pale brown

Creamy or white  
Reddish-brown streaks

Creamy or white

Pale brown  
Dark brown primaries  
Outer webs of all primaries  
have large, pale tawny spots

Brownish flight feathers have  
large pale, tawny spots

Medium brown  
Three or four wide buffy bands  
Wide subterminal band is  
blackish-brown

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**Table 2. Comparison of the fieldmarks of adult Prairie and Taiga Merlins**

FEATURE	TAIGA	PRAIRIE
HEAD	Long, thin white supercilium Faint dark malar mark Pale or tawny cheeks Dark auriculars Wide black shaft streaks on crown apparent at close range	Long, moderately wide white supercilium Malar mark absent or undefined White cheeks Auriculars white or slightly tinged with dark Thin dark crown streaking apparent on all birds
UPPERPARTS	Dark overall Black feather shafts not apparent	Lighter overall Black feather shafts are obvious
UNDERPARTS	White or pale tawny Moderately wide dark brown streaking  Leg feathers have thin dark brown streak on each one Rear flanks have broad arrowhead-shaped mark on each feather Undertail coverts have dark streak on on each feather shaft	Mainly white Narrow to moderately wide dark brown or rufous-brown streaking Leg feathers unmarked or thinly streaked  Distal half of flanks are barred  Undertail coverts either pure white or have a very thin dark streak on each feather shaft
UPPERWING	Small pale spots on the outer web of of the inner primaries	Large pale spots on the outer web of all primaries
UNDERWING	Moderate-sized pale spots on dark flight feathers form a barred pattern Overall dark appearance due to moderate- sized pale spots	Large pale spots on dark flight feathers  Overall light appearance due to large pale spots
TAIL	Three or four distinct, narrow pale bands Narrow white terminal band	Four or five distinct wide white bands Broad white terminal band

coverts to appear to have a lighter cast. Tables 1 and 2 summarize many of these traits and should be useful for the identification of Merlins in Iowa.

The group of Merlins has returned to Glendale Cemetery again this winter! Both Taiga and Prairie subspecies are present and arrive near the end of the day. If you are in the Des Moines area, do not miss out on this great opportunity to study the fieldmarks that differentiate the two subspecies, their sexes, and their ages.

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## Field Reports — Fall 2004

*Paul Hertzell*



*Paul Hertzell*

### WEATHER

The four-month fall season began unseasonably cool, with August temperatures averaging 3rd coldest on record. As early as the 13th, the thermometer dipped below 40 degrees in parts of the state, and on the 21st, several northern cities reported 36 degrees, the lowest temperatures recorded for so early in the season in Iowa since 1964. Late in the month temperatures recovered, and September began warm and sunny. In fact, September finished with the same average temperature as August — a very unusual occurrence. But the month also experienced record-setting severe weather in some parts of the state. Nine tornados on the 5th pushed the annual total to a new record of 110, and then really heavy rains in the north on the 13th, 14th, and 15th flooded the landscape. Rain totaling 6 to 8 inches fell in many places across the northwest; at Spencer, Estherville, and Swea City, the rainfall for the period ending at 7 AM on the

15th was the heaviest ever recorded for a 24-hour period. Cold returned in early October with hard freezes across most of Iowa in the first week. Like August, the month actually had colder temperatures early than late. The middle of the month was marked by mild weather, and the fall colors held on unusually late. Cloudy conditions and steady south winds, kept most locations mild and ice-free during the latter part of the month, and the warmth continued into early November. Then, as this fall opened cold, it ended cold with marshes and small ponds across northern Iowa freezing early. It snowed as far south as Keokuk on the 24th, and most locations in Iowa saw 1 to 2 inches by the 28th.

### HABITAT, GENERAL TRENDS

The waterfowl migration was weak. In typical years, hundreds of thousands of Snow Geese are seen along the Missouri River in the west, but the high count this fall was bare-

ly over 5,900. DeSoto NWR reported a dismal maximum of 120 Snow Geese on 24 November, which can be compared to 43,000 two days earlier straight south across the border at Squaw Creek NWR in northwest Missouri. Several contributors commented on the low numbers of ducks, and Lowell Washburn (Iowa DNR) noted the migration began as one of the poorest in memory, “and then it got worse.” Washburn speculates the bulk of the migration passed to the west of Iowa. Wet conditions resulting from unusually heavy rains in September and October probably added to the difficulty of finding ducks by scattering already low numbers. The September rains also put an end to some spectacular shorebird numbers in the north. In late August and the first half of September, Union Slough NWR in Kossuth County attracted thousands of shorebirds. In early September, about 5,500 birds were counted there, of which nearly half were Pectoral Sandpipers evenly split between adults and juveniles, and 560 were Lesser Yellowlegs, which was the largest fall concentration since 1991. But the record heavy rains on 13–15 September obliterated any mud in the northern part of the state, and reports of shorebirds became an exclusively southern Iowa affair. The best numbers were found at locations along Red Rock Reservoir and Hawkeye WA at Coralville Reservoir, until October rains washed them away too. There were only two November reports of migrant shorebirds in the entire state. For many areas of the state, the wet conditions were in great contrast to last year’s drought, and most places that had been dry a year ago held ample water at the end of the fall season.

At Hitchcock NA in Pottawattamie County, record hawk watch coverage combined with a good flight to yield an unprecedented 11,953 raptors and vultures. New season high totals were established for 12 different species. On the best day, 27 September, counters tallied 12% of the entire season’s total of hawks and vultures. At the Grammer Grove hawk watch in the east, now in its 15th year, the best day was 20 September, when 13% of their season total passed overhead. Especially high totals were recorded for Ospreys and Broad-winged Hawks. Long-eared Owls and Northern Saw-whet Owls returned in the last two days of October, and 11 Short-eared Owls were found in Woodbury County on 5 November. There were about two weeks of overlap in the shrike migration in the last part of October.

Much of this fall was dominated by south winds. Three observers from eastern Iowa independently commented on the low densities of migrant warblers and vireos. There were no unusually-early neotropical migrants, but three vagrants from the west, two Townsend’s Solitaires and one Varied Thrush, did arrive record-early. Red-breasted Nuthatches, Pine Siskins, and Red Crossbills were found in exceptional numbers. An odd statistic is the most-reported warbler this fall was Canada Warbler, with 24 reports involving 45 birds.

There were several instances of significant blackbird flocks encountered this fall, with two, in particular, estimated to contain a half of a million birds each. On 5 October at Hawkeye WA, a group of 500,000 mostly Red-winged Blackbirds were seen coming into the marsh habitat at dusk. Then, on 3 November, at Anderson Lake in Hamilton County, another huge mixed flock was estimated to contain 105,000 European Starlings, 95,000 Red-winged Blackbirds, 140,000 Common Grackles, and 45,000 Brown-headed Cowbirds. About 1,000 Rusty Blackbirds were counted by hawk watchers at Hitchcock NA on 22 November, and 150 Brewer’s Blackbirds in Kossuth County on 3 November were the most in a single flock that observer had ever seen.



## UNUSUAL SPECIES

Iowa's reservoirs and large lakes continue to reward birders with significant events in the fall. In October, Saylorville Reservoir produced a Black-legged Kittiwake (casual) and the year's only Sabine's Gull. In November, one of two Red-throated Loons occurred there, and a Neotropic Cormorant found near the dam was only the second ever recorded in the state. Downstream at Red Rock Reservoir, two August Black-necked Stilts became the second fall record for this species. At Hawkeye WA near Coralville Reservoir, three Red Knots (casual) were found in August, and in September, the fabled Black-headed Gull made its annual appearance at Spirit Lake. Also reported this fall was a single Parasitic Jaeger (accidental). Unusual raptors reported were two Ferruginous Hawks (accidental), and one Gyrfalcon (accidental). In late October, a Groove-billed Ani (accidental) was found on 20 October and stayed around for four more days. A rare Scissor-tailed Flycatcher was seen on the latest-ever date of 6 November. Three visitors from the far west were record early, two Townsend's Solitaires (casual), and a Varied Thrush. Also reported were three birds potentially new to the state list, a Boreal Owl, a Gray Flycatcher, and a McKay's Bunting.

## SPECIES DATA

All CAPS = Casual or Accidental species. \* = documented. County names are in italics. Full names of contributors are at the end of the article. Abbreviations used: **A** = area, **L** = lake, **m.ob.** = many observers, **NA** = nature area, **NWR** = national wildlife refuge, **P** = park, **R** = river, **RA** = recreation area, **Res** = reservoir, **SF** = state forest, **Sl** = slough, **SP** = state park, **USNWR** = Union Slough National Wildlife Refuge, **WPA** = waterfowl production area, **WA** = wildlife area.

### Greater White-fronted Goose:

There were two reports away from the Missouri River: 1 possibly injured bird at the Hubbard sewage lagoon in *Hardin* 24 Aug–1 Oct (MPR), and 1 at Terra L in *Polk* on 14 Oct (JG). The most were 300 on 29 Oct at Hitchcock NA in *Pottawattamie* (MO).

**Snow Goose:** The most were 5,917 on 21 Nov counted at Hitchcock NA in *Pottawattamie* (MO). There were seven scattered reports of from 1 to 26 birds.

**Ross's Goose:** All: 2 on 30 Oct in *Pottawattamie* (MO), 1 on 3 Nov in *Black Hawk* (MJ), 2 on 14 Nov at Kent P in *Johnson* (CJC), and 1 on 20, 21 Nov in *Polk* (JLF, RLC).

### Cackling Goose: Elevated to species

status from the ranks of the Canada Goose by the AOU this year. The particular subspecies *Branta hutchinsii hutchinsii*, previously known as "Richardson's Goose," is undoubtedly regular in Iowa, but the timing and distribution of its presence is not well-documented. Creating a solid database of records for this taxon will involve separating it from *Branta canadensis parvipes*, now the smallest race of Canada Goose. Six of 15 reports this fall were accompanied with details suggestive of *hutchinsii*. The first two of these were reports on the same day, 6 Nov, involving 3 birds in *Woodbury* (BFH) and 12 birds in *Cerro Gordo* (PH-photos). The others were 20 on 9 Nov in *Johnson* (THK), 21 on 14 Nov in *Kossuth* (MCK), 80 on 25 Nov in *Cerro Gordo* (PH-photos), and 200 on 28 Nov in *Carroll* (JJD, SJD).

**Canada Goose:** With the separation of Cackling Goose, there is renewed interest in tracking the various subspecies of the Canada Goose, in particular, the smallest subspecies, *parvipes*, because of the likelihood of its confusion with *hutchinsii*. The "Giant" race, *maxima*, is a permanent resident in Iowa, and the "Interior" race, *interior*, breeds in eastern Canada and winters regularly in Iowa.

This fall, *parvipes* was photographed in November at two locations, in *Polk* County (JG) and in *Cerro Gordo* County (PH), and mentioned on one field report, although without details.

**Mute Swan:** 1 was at Dan Green Sl in *Clay* 27 Aug–6 Sep (LAS), and another along the Mississippi R in *Lee* on 26 Nov (CRE).

**Trumpeter Swan:** With 8 successful nests during summer (Dinsmore 2004), untaged offspring from last summer, and both wild and released visitors from nearby states, the mix of adults, subadults, tagged and untaged birds is a fascinating mess.

**Tundra Swan:** The first big concentration was 900 on 6 Nov at Pool 9 along the Mississippi R in *Allamakee* (DeC), where numbers peaked at 3,000 in the last week of November (FL, JG, DAK). The only report away from the Mississippi R was 3 on 10 Nov at Little Wall L in *Hamilton* (SSP).

**Wood Duck:** The most reported were 120 in *Appanoose* on 15 Sep (RLC).

**Gadwall:** Some high counts were 440 on 17 Oct in *Polk* (AaB, RLC), and 450 on 7 Nov in *Appanoose* (DAK).

**American Wigeon:** Reported from 8 locations with a high count of 120 in *Allamakee* on 13 Nov (DAK).

**American Black Duck:** First: 1 on 7 Oct at Terra Lake in *Polk* (JG). Also reported from Saylorville Res and multiple points along the Mississippi R (CRE, AaB, WO, FL, DAK, RG, SSP).

**Blue-winged Teal:** Up to 500 were on the move at Saylorville Res in *Polk* on 28–30 Aug (JJD, RLC), where numbers held through September (AaB).

**Cinnamon Teal:** No reports. Unless a Cinnamon Teal is recorded in Dec, 2004 will close with no reports of this barely regular species.

**Northern Shoveler:** 6 were still at L Manawa in *Pottawattamie* on 26 Nov (LJP, BKP).

**Northern Pintail:** Up to 400 were present in a massive build up of waterfowl at Pool 9 on the Mississippi R in *Allamakee* on 13 Nov (DAK). Otherwise, the only concentration was 65 at L Manawa in *Pottawattamie* on 1 Oct (LJP, BKP), the same day as the peak flight noted at Hitchcock NA (MO).

**Green-winged Teal:** Peaked in the last week of October with 820 at Saylorville in *Polk* (JJD, AaB).

**Canvasback:** 43,000 were estimated to be at Pool 9 on the Mississippi R in *Allamakee* on 13 Nov (DAK).

**Redhead:** All: 8 were at Saylorville Res in *Polk* on 17 Oct (JG, AaB), 44 were counted flying over the Hitchcock NA in *Pottawattamie* on 24 Oct, and 14 were still at L Manawa in *Pottawattamie* on 24 Nov (LJP, BKP).

**Ring-necked Duck:** Few reports, and none involving large concentrations. The most were 70 counted at Pool 9 in *Allamakee* on 13 Nov (DAK).

**Greater Scaup:** The first few were 1 in Mason City on 31 Oct (HJ-photo), 1 on 2 Nov at Little Wall L in *Hamilton* (SSP, KLP), and 2 on 5 Nov at Saylorville Res in *Polk* (AaB). Some high counts were 48 on 6 Nov at Spirit L in *Dickinson* (LAS), and 29 on 26 Nov on E Okoboji L in *Dickinson* (ET).

**Lesser Scaup:** The largest raft was a mere 300 on 22 Nov at Rathbun L in *Appanoose* (RLC).

**Surf Scoter:** All: 1 on 20 Oct at Coralville L in *Johnson* (RD), 1 on 21–24 Oct at Diamond L in *Poweshiek* (MPR, m.ob.), 1 on 2 Nov in *Hamilton* (KLP), 1 on 7 Nov at Rathbun L in *Appanoose* (CJC), and 4 on 19–28 Nov on the Mississippi R at Bettendorf in *Scott* (DR, CRE, DP).

**White-winged Scoter:** The only two reports were on the same day: 2 on 7 Nov at Pleasant Creek RA in *Linn* (DP, DAK, CRE), and 1 on 7 Nov at Rathbun L in *Appanoose* (CJC, DAK, RLC, TJ).

**Black Scoter:** All: 1 on 7 Nov at Rathbun L in *Appanoose* (RLC, TJ), and 1 on the Mississippi R at Bettendorf in *Scott* (DP, CRE).

**Long-tailed Duck:** The only report was 3 on 21, 22 Nov at Rathbun L in *Appanoose* (TJ, RLC).

**Bufflehead:** The first was 1 on 14 Oct at L Manawa in *Pottawattamie* (LJP, BKP). 550 were among a large concentration of waterfowl at Pool 9 in *Allamakee* on 13 Nov (DAK). Otherwise, peaks were 167 on 21 Nov at Saylorville Res in *Polk* (AaB), and 150 on 22 Nov at Rathbun L in *Appanoose* (RLC).

**Common Goldeneye:** All: 3 on 11 Nov at Saylorville Res in *Polk* (AaB), 70 on 13 Nov at Pool 9 in *Allamakee* (DAK), 2 on 13 Nov at L Manawa in *Pottawattamie* (LJP, BKP), and 5 on 21 Nov at Saylorville (RLC).

**Hooded Merganser:** Some concentrations were 56 on 8 Nov at Saylorville Res in *Polk* (AaB), 180 on 13 Nov at Pool 9 in *Allamakee* (DAK), and 95 at L Manawa in *Pottawattamie* (LJP, BKP).

**Common Merganser:** A female that summered at Port Neal ponds in *Woodbury* (BFH) was still present at the start of the fall season. The first migrants were 9 on 5, 6 Nov at Saylorville Res in *Polk* (AaB, JG).

**Red-breasted Merganser:** The first were 6 on 30 Oct at Saylorville Res in *Polk* (AaB, JG). Also reported in November at L Manawa in *Pottawattamie* (LJP, BKP), L Macbride in *Johnson* (JLF), Pool 9 in *Allamakee* (DAK, MWJ), and Clear Lake in *Cerro Gordo* (PH).

**Ruddy Duck:** The first concentrations were 200 on 31 Oct at Clear Lake in *Cerro Gordo* (PH), and 118 on 3 Nov at L Manawa in *Pottawattamie* (LJP, BKP). 750 were at Pool 9 along the Mississippi R in *Allamakee* on 13 Nov (DAK).

**Gray Partridge:** Groups of 1–12 were reported from the edges of its range in *Guthrie* (CJC), *Scott* (DR), and *Clayton* (DAK).

**Ruffed Grouse:** No reports.

**Northern Bobwhite:** The three reports most likely to be of wild birds all came from the SE quadrant of the state (JLF, RLC). DNR roadside surveys in August counted no Bobwhite in the northern two-thirds of the state.

**Red-throated Loon:** A juvenile was at Pleasant Creek RA in *Linn* on 10–12 Oct (CRE, CJC, BSc, RIA, PHA, KN), and another was near the dam at Saylorville Res in *Polk* on 5, 6 Nov (AaB, JG).

**Pacific Loon:** No reports.

**Common Loon:** In contrast to last year's intense, 3-day affair, the Common Loon migration was drawn out, with pockets of 1–44 found throughout the state, starting on 14 Oct at Saylorville in *Polk* (AaB, JG). The maximum at a single location was 44 on 9 Nov at Saylorville (AaB), but on 21 Nov, 97 were reported between Clear Lake (RG, PH), Saylorville (AaB, CRE, RLC), and Rathbun L (TJ).

**Pied-billed Grebe:** 53 were counted at L Manawa in *Pottawattamie* (LJP, BKP).

**Horned Grebe:** The most-reported grebe, with 26 reports from 10 counties. The most were 28 on 7 Nov at Saylorville Res in *Polk* (DAK).

**Red-necked Grebe:** All: 1 on 31 Aug at Pinchey Bottoms in *Marion* (SSP), 1 on 27 Oct – 2 Nov at Coralville L in *Johnson* (THK, JLF, CJC, DP), 1 on 14 Nov at Pool 9 in *Allamakee* (MWJ, DAK), and 1 on 24 Nov at L Manawa in *Pottawattamie* (LJP, BKP).

**Eared Grebe:** All: 2 on 28 Aug at the Forest City settling ponds in *Hancock* (PH), 1 on 28 Sep at L Manawa in *Pottawattamie* (LJP, BKP), up to 4 on 14–30 Oct at Saylorville Res in *Polk* (AaB, JG), and 1 lingering juvenile at Saylorville on 27 Nov (SJD).

**Western Grebe:** 1 was at L Manawa in *Pottawattamie* from 28 Sep–2 Oct (LJP, BKP), and 1–4 were at Saylorville Res in *Polk* 5–21 Nov (m.ob.)

**American White Pelican:** Although the Chase Lake, ND, colony abandoned nesting efforts and dispersed in late May, thousands poured through the state on schedule, staging in particular at Jester Park in Polk, where J Dinsmore said 14,000 on 30 Aug were the most he had ever seen there. Another 10,000 were counted in *Johnson* on 18 Sep (CJC, CRE), and 6,894 counted on 25 Sep at Hitchcock NA in *Pottawattamie* was a single day record there (MO). Lingered into the last days of Nov were 4 at Rice Lake in *Winnebago* (JB), 50 at Saylorville (JJD, SJD, SSP), and 2 at Coralville L (CRE).

**NEOTROPIC CORMORANT:** One found on 19 Nov just north of the Saylorville Res dam in *Polk* departed the next day (AaB\*, AJ\*, JG\*, JLF\*, MD\*, THK\*).

**Double-crested Cormorant:** The most were 4,602 counted throughout the day on 27 Sep at the Hitchcock NA in *Pottawattamie* (MO). 76 still at Saylorville Res on 27 Nov was an unusually high number for late in the fall (JJD, SJD).

**American Bittern:** All: 1 on 9 Sep at Zirbel Sl in *Cerro Gordo* (David Chaffin *fide* PH), and 1 on 24 Oct at Owego wetlands in *Woodbury* (BFH).

**Least Bittern:** All: 1–5 on 2–11 Aug at L Macbride in *Johnson* (JLF, THK), 2 on 7 Aug at Long Pond in *Guthrie* (JG), 3 on 5 Sep at Sedan Bottoms in *Appanoose* (TJ, RLC), 1 on 7 Sep at Ventura Marsh in *Cerro Gordo* (David Chaffin *fide* PH), and 1 on 22 Sep at Banner WA in *Warren* (JG).

**Great Egret:** Hundreds gathered at Runnells WA in *Marion* in late August (JG, CRE, SSP, RLC), with a high count of 512 there on 23 Aug (RIA, PHA). Other concentrations were 200 on 27 Aug at Hawkeye WA in *Johnson* (THK), and 125 on 29 Aug at USNWR in *Kossuth* (MCK). Last was 1 on 27 Oct in *Polk* (AaB).

**Snowy Egret:** All: 3 on 6–8 Aug on the Skunk R in *Keokuk* (JJD, DP, RIA, PHA), 2 on 23 Aug–6 Sep at Hawkeye WA in *Johnson* (MCD-details, CJC, CRE, DAK, DP, THK), and 1 stayed record late at Saylorville Res in *Polk* through 23 Oct (JG-details, AaB, WO).

**Little Blue Heron:** 1 or 2 immatures were at Hawkeye WA in *Johnson* 1 Aug–12 Sep (MCD-details, DP, JPB), and 1 immature was at Chichaqua WA in *Polk* on 5 Aug (DK)

**Cattle Egret:** First: 1 on 9 Aug in *Johnson* (JLF). Last: 1 on 7 Nov in *Appanoose* (TJ). There were 5 other reports of 1 or 2 birds (RLC, MCK, RGo, MCK, DP, CJC).

**Green Heron:** Last: 18 on 5 Sep at Sedan Bottoms in *Appanoose* (RLC), and 2 on 6 Sep at Cardinal Marsh in *Winneshiek* (DeC).

**Black-crowned Night Heron:** All: 5 on 8 Sep at USNWR in *Kossuth*, 5 on 25 Sep at Hawkeye in *Johnson* (JG, MCK, RGo), 3 on 3 Oct at Banner WA in *Warren* (JG), 1 on 30 Oct at Lost Grove L in *Scott* (DR), and 1 juvenile that arrived on 30 Oct at Cedar L in *Linn* stayed through the end of the season (BSc, CJC, CRE, JLF, PHA, RIA, THK)

**Yellow-crowned Night Heron:** No reports.

**White-faced Ibis:** 1 on 2–6 Oct at Banner WA in *Warren* (JG-photos, AJ, BSc, DP, RIA, PHA), and a juvenile on 9 Oct at Richard Bishop WPA in *Clay* (JB-photos, JG-photos, LAS).

**Plegadis species:** One was at Hawkeye WA in *Johnson* on 8 Sep (CRE, CJC).

**Turkey Vulture:** A record season total of 3,074 was established at Hitchcock NA in *Pottawattamie* (MO). Last was 1 on 24 Nov at Grammer Grove in *Marshall* (MPR-details).

**Osprey:** Reported widely, from 15 counties. The season total of 184 at Hitchcock NA hawk watch in *Pottawattamie* was more than twice their previous record total (MO). 39 were counted there on 23 Sep, alone. 6 were in the air all at the same time over Lock & Dam 14 in *Scott* on 31 Aug (DR). The last was 1 on 4 Nov in *Polk* (JG).

**Mississippi Kite:** The only reports came from Hitchcock NA in the Loess Hills of *Pottawattamie* where the season total of 16 is amazing for a species that is accidental in the Dakotas, Manitoba, Ontario, and casual in Minnesota. The first there were 3 on 19 Aug, the peak was 4 on 27 Sep, and the last was record late on 10 Oct (MO).

**Bald Eagle:** The 947 counted at Hitchcock NA was another new season record total, with the best day being 24 Nov when 63 were counted (MO). The high count at Grammer Grove in *Marshall* was 51 on 7 Nov (BPr). A spectacular group of 300+ were discovered and photographed 28 Nov in a *Jones* field, feeding on several carcasses (JG).

**Northern Harrier:** Reported from 15 counties. 14 were at Owego Wetlands in *Woodbury* on 2 Nov (GLV), the same day Hitchcock NA, straight south of Owego, experienced their peak flight. The season total of 344 at Hitchcock was a new season record.

**Sharp-shinned Hawk:** The first were 3 on 27 Aug in the Loess Hills of *Pottawattamie* (MO). The peak flight at Grammer Grove in *Marshall* was 151 on 23 Oct (BPr), and at Hitchcock NA it was 102 on 1 Oct (MO). The season total of 1086 at Hitchcock was a record.

**Cooper's Hawk:** The peak flight in the east was 13 on 22 Sep at Grammer Grove (BPr), and in the west, 20 on 1 Oct (MO). 273 made a new season record total at Hitchcock NA (MO).

**Northern Goshawk:** First few: 2 on 29 Sep at Hitchcock NA in *Pottawattamie* (MO), and 1 on 11 Oct at Otter Creek Marsh in *Tama* (MPR). There were eleven reports with 4 identified as juveniles.

**Red-shouldered Hawk:** Reported from seven counties in the east and central, and *Pottawattamie* in the west. 3 were seen on 24 Oct at George Wyth SP in *Black Hawk* (AlB). The season total of 8 at Hitchcock NA was a record (MO).

**Broad-winged Hawk:** Nearly all passed through during the period 18–27 Sep. About 1,000 were counted 19 Sep over Coralville L in *Johnson* (CJC), the same day 215 were seen at Sedan Bottoms in *Appanoose* (RLC). The last was 1 on 13 Oct at Grammer Grove in *Marshall* (BPr).

**Swainson's Hawk:** Only three reports away from the Missouri R valley: 1 on 21 Sep at Grammer Grove in *Marshall* (BPr), 1 on 28 Sep at Terra L in *Polk* (JG), and 1 on 2 Oct in *Cerro Gordo* (RG, PH). In contrast, 2,230 flew past the Hitchcock NA in *Pottawattamie* from 27 Aug to 13 Oct (MO), a new season record total.

**FERRUGINOUS HAWK:** Two were documented by hawk watchers at Hitchcock NA. One on 19 Sep was accepted by the Records Committee. The other is pending.

**Rough-legged Hawk:** 1 on 14 Sep in *Appanoose* was third-earliest (TJ). The next date was 16 Oct when 1 was at Ada Hayden P in *Story* (WO), and another was in *Pottawattamie* (MO). 4 flew past the Grammer Grove hawk watchers on 4 Nov (BPr).

**Golden Eagle:** First: 1 on 23 Sep at Hitchcock NA in *Pottawattamie* (MO). The Hitchcock season total of 36 was a record. 5 were counted at Grammer Grove in *Marshall*, with the first on 23 Oct (BPr). All others: 1 on 7 Nov in *Linn* (CRE, DP), 1 in *Allamakee* on 14 Nov (RGo), and 1 on 14 Nov in *Clayton* (DAK).

**Merlin:** First few: 1 on 31 Aug in *Polk* (JJD-details), and 1 on 4 Sep in Algona in *Kossuth* (MCK-details). 2 on 12 Sep in *Scott* (DR), and 1 on 4 Oct in *Johnson* (CRE) were the only reports in the east. The first at Glendale Cemetery in Des Moines was noted on 18 Sep (RIC), and 4 were there on 20 Nov (JG). 35 counted on the season at Hitchcock was a new record (MO).

**GYRFALCON:** A report from Hitchcock was referred to the Records Committee.

**Peregrine Falcon:** Reported from 11 counties, but curiously, none north of the *Boone-Marshall-Linn* latitude. 20 of the 40 birds reported occurred during 12–25 Sep (CRE, DK, MO, RGo, RLC, SSP).

**Prairie Falcon:** 1 photographed on 3 Nov in *Polk* (JG) was the only one away from *Pottawattamie* where 7 were recorded (MO-details, LJP/BKP-details).

**Yellow Rail:** Many looked for this elusive little bird, but only 1 was found on 28 Sep at Cumming wetlands in *Warren* (JG-details).

**Virginia Rail:** The last was 1 on 11 Oct at Cardinal Marsh in *Winneshiek* (DeC).

**Sora:** The last was 1 on 24 Oct at Owego wetlands in *Woodbury* (BFH). Most were 42 on 15 Sep at Sedan in *Appanoose* (RLC).

**Common Moorhen:** In August, broods were found in *Clinton* (BSc), *Guthrie* (JG), and *Story* (SSP, KLP), and on 2–9 Oct, juveniles were seen at Diehl Wetlands in *Warren* (JJD, JG), the last of the season.

**Sandhill Crane:** A flock of ~125 Sandhill Cranes over Walch WA in *Cerro Gordo* on 6 Nov was the 2nd-largest in modern record-keeping (Bruce Marzinske *fide* PH). 61 counted 100 miles southwest of Walch at Saylorville in *Polk* on the very next day (AaB, CJC), may have been part of the same group. Also on 6 Nov, 22 were at Trumbull L in *Clay* (LAS), and on 7 Nov 28 were counted at Hitchcock NA in *Pottawattamie* (MO).

**Black-bellied Plover:** The first was an early group of 3 on 10 Aug at Hawkeye WA in *Johnson* (RD). Groups of 1–10 were seen at ten locations around the state. The last 10 flew over Hitchcock NA on 31 Oct (MO: “Something good always seems to happen on Halloween at HNA. It’s a nice tradition.”)

**American Golden Plover:** First: 1 on 11 Aug at Hawkeye in *Johnson* (THK). The most and last were 16 on 13 Oct at Welp WPA in *Kossuth* (MCK).

**Semipalmated Plover:** Already in the state in July (Dinsmore 2004), these tiny plovers were reported in small numbers until 3 Oct at Ada Hayden Park in *Story* (WO). High counts were 37 on 25 Aug at Runnells Overlook in *Warren* (SSP, KLP), and 36 on 6 Sep at USNWR in *Kossuth* (MCK).

**Piping Plover:** The only report was 1 on 26 Aug at Jester Park in *Polk* (JB-details, JG).

**Killdeer:** A large concentration of 175 on 27 Aug was at the Nauman sod farm in *Johnson* (THK).

**Black-necked Stilt:** A sighting of 2 females on 28 Aug at Runnells WA in *Marion* is only the second fall record for the state (AaB).

**American Avocet:** All: 1 on 7, 8 Sep at Hawkeye WA in *Johnson* (CRE, CJC), 2 on 2 Oct at Saylorville Res in *Polk* (AaB), up to 38 at Saylorville 12–24 Oct (RIA, PHA, RLC), and 4 on private property in *Johnson* on 30 Oct (RD).

**Greater Yellowlegs:** The most were up to 55 on 24–29 Oct at Owego wetlands in *Woodbury* (BFH, GLV). Last was 1 on 7 Nov at Knutson's Pond in *Cerro Gordo* (RGo, PH).

**Lesser Yellowlegs:** 560 on 28 Aug at Union Slough NWR in *Kossuth* (PH) were the most in fall since 1991. The last was 1 on 29 Oct at Owego wetlands in *Woodbury* (GLV).

**Solitary Sandpiper:** Some high counts were 15 on 1 Aug at Hawkeye WA in *Johnson* (DP), and 8 on 29 Aug at USNWR in *Kossuth* (MCK). The last was record late by a full week on 20 Oct near Palo in *Linn* (THK-details, JLF, CJC).

**Willet:** Five August reports, and then the last were 3 on 6 Sep at Hawkeye WA in *Johnson* (MCD-details, BSc).

**Spotted Sandpiper:** The last was 1 on 10 Oct at Saylorville Res in *Polk* (AaB).

**Upland Sandpiper:** 12 were counted in rural *Kossuth* on 4 Aug (MCK, PH). The only other report was 1 on 26 Aug in *Johnson* (BSc, MCD).

**Marbled Godwit:** 1 on 20 Aug at Saylorville Res in *Polk* (JJJ-details) may have been the same bird that appeared downstream at Runnells WA in *Marion* (MPr) five days later.

**Ruddy Turnstone:** Found at four locations: 1 or 2 were at Runnells WA in *Marion* 25–28 Aug (AaB, JG, MPr, RLC);

1 or 2 were at Hawkeye WA in *Johnson* (CJC, RD, BSc) until 8 showed up on 7 Sep (CRE, DP); 1 was at Trickle Slough in *Dickinson* on 6 Sep (LAS); and a record-late bird was at Grey Eagle WR in *Wapello* 23–31 Oct (TJ-details, JG-photo, AaB, CJC).

**RED KNOT:** 3 at Hawkeye WA in *Johnson* on 1–3 Aug (JLF\*, MCD\*, CRE, CJC) made the sixth consecutive fall appearance of this casual species. Two later reports at the same location are pending review by the Records Committee.

**Sanderling:** Nine reports, with 2 on 11 Sep at Port Neal ponds in *Woodbury* (BFH) the only one not at a major reservoir. Most were 36 on 8 Sep at Hawkeye WA in *Johnson* (CJC, CRE). The last were 2 on 31 Oct at Saylorville Res in *Polk* (AaB).

**Semipalmated Sandpiper:** The only large concentrations were at Union Slough NWR in *Kossuth* where up to 300 were in among several thousand shorebirds in the first week of Sep (MCK, PH). After extremely heavy rains hit Iowa in mid-Sep, encounters with this species ended, excluding two unsubstantiated reports of single birds.

**Least Sandpiper:** Up to 450 were at Union Slough NWR in *Kossuth* 20 Aug–6 Sep (MCK, PH). As with Semipalmated Sandpipers, reports of this species were greatly reduced following mid-September rains. The last were isolated pairs: 2 on 22 Oct in *Hardin* (MPr), 2 on 24 Oct in *Wapello* (CJC), and 2 on 29 Oct in *Story* (WO).

**White-rumped Sandpiper:** All: 1 on 14 Aug at Runnells WA in *Polk* (JG), 1 at Ada Hayden P in *Story* (WO), and 1 on 20 Oct in *Linn* (CJC-details, THK-details) was third latest.

**Baird's Sandpiper:** Three early birds had showed up in the 3rd week of July (Dinsmore 2004), but then there was a 3-

week lull until 13 Aug when birds arrived at 3 different locations— 2 at Saylorville Res in *Polk* (JG), 8 at USNWR in *Kossuth* (MCK), and 2 at Fort Atkinson in *Winneshiek* (DeC). A group of 77 juveniles on 29 Aug at USNWR (MCK) surpassed the previous fall record of 73 for this species at one location. The last 2 were seen 5 Oct at Saylorville (JG).

**Pectoral Sandpiper:** A trickle of July migrants (Dinsmore 2004) built into thousands by mid-August. 1,250 were at Runnells WA in *Marion* on 28 Aug (RLC), and numbers at USNWR in *Kossuth* hovered around 2,000 from mid-Aug to mid-Sep (MCK, PH). At USNWR, the August population was almost exclusively adults, but by 4 Sep about half of the 2,500 birds were juveniles. The last few were 2 on 17 Oct at Union Hills WA in *Cerro Gordo* (PH) and 1 in *Linn* on 20 Oct (CJC).

**Dunlin:** There were only 7 reports totaling 30 birds. First was 1 on 14 Oct at Saylorville Res in *Polk* (AaB, RLC). The high count was a mere 13 on 16 Oct at Polk City WA in *Polk* (JG). Last were 2 on 20 Nov at Dewey's Pasture in *Clay* (LAS).

**Stilt Sandpiper:** In August, pockets of 15–60 were found at Hawkeye WA in *Johnson* (THK), Runnells WA in *Marion* (AaB, RLC), and USNWR in *Kossuth* (MCK, RGo, PH). Numbers built to season peak of 550 at USNWR on 4 Sep (RGo, PH). Last few were 2 on 5 Oct in a *Kossuth* flooded field (MCK), and 2 on 10 Oct at Saylorville Res (AaB).

**Buff-breasted Sandpiper:** Arrived in late July (Dinsmore 2004), and then continued to be found in tiny numbers through mid-September. A total of 33 birds were reported at ten locations. Some groups were 5 on 5–12 Sep at Hawkeye WA in *Johnson* (CJC, DP), 7 on 25–28 Aug at Runnells in *Marion* (MPR, SSP, KLP, AaB, RLC, TJ), and 9 on 12 Sep at USNWR in *Kossuth* (MCK). The last was 1 on 17 Sep at Jester Park in *Polk* (SaB).

**Short-billed Dowitcher:** First appeared in July (Dinsmore 2004). By August, everyone who aged their birds saw only juveniles. The high count was 35 on 4 Sep at USNWR in *Kossuth* (RGo, PH). The last before Long-billeds began being reported in the state were 5 on 7 Sep at Hawkeye in *Johnson* (DP). The only later report, of 35 on 15 Sep, had no details.

**Long-billed Dowitcher:** The first few were 1 at Hawkeye WA in *Johnson* (DP), and 4 on 17 Sep at Jester Park in *Polk* (AaB). Some high counts were 59 on 14 Oct at Saylorville Res in *Polk* (AaB), and 55 across the highway at Polk City WA on 16 Oct (JG). Last was 1 very late bird on 20 Nov at Dewey's Pasture in *Clay* (LAS-details) [third latest].

**Wilson's Snipe:** The first concentration of birds was 22 on 28 Aug at Sweet Marsh in *Bremer* (DAK). The high count was 35 in a wet *Kossuth* field on 6 Oct (PH).

**American Woodcock:** All: 1 on 5 Aug in suitable breeding habitat at Two Waters WA in *Worth* (PH), and 2 on 27 Oct in rural *Cerro Gordo* (Jay Friday *fide* PH).

**Wilson's Phalarope:** The last few were up to 3 seen at USNWR in *Kossuth* 1–6 Sep (MCK, PH). And then they were gone.

**Red-necked Phalarope:** 1 on 20 Aug at USNWR in *Kossuth* (RGo) was the season's first migrant, and 5 at that location during the first week of Sep was the high count (MCK, RGo, PH). All others: 1 or 2 at Runnells WA in *Marion* 23 Aug–4 Sep (RIA, PHA, SSP, MP, JB, JG, AaB), 2 at Saylorville Res 3–5 Sep (AaB), 1 on 6 Sep at Sandbar Sl in *Dickinson* (LAS), and 2 at Pinchey Bottoms in *Marion* 11–19 Sep (RTr, JG), which were also the last.

**PARASITIC JAEGER:** A report was referred to the Records Committee.

**Franklin's Gull:** A drawn-out, flick-



ering line of birds estimated to be 10 miles long and containing at least 16,000 individuals was tracked through spotting scopes by hawk watchers at Hitchcock NA in *Pottawattamie* as it moved down the Missouri River Valley on 4 Oct. "Waves of gulls would stream off the top of kettles, glide for miles, and then join yet another swirling kettle. They would spiral upward to the top, and the process would begin again..."—MO. The same day, at L Manawa, 10,000 were counted (LJP, BKP). Another 6,400 were at Saylorville on 10 Oct (AaB). The last two were seen on 20 Nov at L Manawa (LJP, BKP), and Ada Hayden P in *Story* (WO).

**BLACK-HEADED GULL:** A lone bird was at the north end of Spirit L in *Dickinson* 26 Sep–9 Oct (JG\*, JB\*, DCh\*, ET-details, LAS).

**Bonaparte's Gull:** The first were 18 on 25 Sep at Saylorville Res in *Polk*, where numbers built to about 310 by 11 Nov (AaB). Also reported in small numbers at eight other locations. The last were 48 on 28 Nov at Saylorville (AaB).

**Herring Gull:** 2 early arrivals were found at Saylorville Res on 15 Aug (RIA, PHA). On 7 Sep, 2 more were found at Hawkeye WA in *Johnson* (CRE).

**Thayer's Gull:** A juvenile was found at Saylorville Res in *Polk* on 18 Oct (AaB), the 2nd earliest on record. It stayed around for about a month (JG, CRE, CJC). An adult was at Red Rock Res in *Marion* on 14 Nov (AaB).

**Great Black-backed Gull:** One on the east coast of Iowa and one on the west coast. An adult was at Pool 13 on the Mississippi R in *Clinton* 27 Oct–20 Nov (DP, PVN), and another adult gave Hitchcock hawk watchers a frighteningly good look on Halloween.

**Sabine's Gull:** A juvenile at Saylorville Res in *Polk* 14, 15 Oct was the only report (AaB, JG, CJC).

**BLACK-LEGGED KITTIWAKE:** A juvenile was seen over Saylorville Res in *Polk* on 27 Oct (JG\*).

**Caspian Tern:** Birds that gathered at Jester Park in *Polk* 13 Aug–6 Sep (JB, AaB, JG) peaked at 97 on 27 Aug (JB). Also reported in small numbers from 7 other scattered locations. The last few were 2 on 16 Sep at Zirbel Sl in *Cerro Gordo* (David Chaffin), and 1 on 21 Sep at Saylorville (CJC).

**Common Tern:** 2 at USNWR in *Kossuth* 26 Aug–4 Sep (RGo-details, PH), and 2–4 on 21, 22 Sep at Saylorville Res in *Polk* (JB-details-photos, JG, CJC) were the only reports with details.

**Forster's Tern:** Last two: 1 on 10 Oct at Saylorville Res in *Polk* (AaB), and 1 on 15 Oct at Coralville L in *Johnson* (JLF, CJC).

**Least Tern:** The only report was a count of 12 on 8 Aug at the Mid America Energy Ponds in *Pottawattamie* (THK).

**Black Tern:** The largest concentration was 29 on 16 Aug at Spirit L in *Dickinson* (ET). Last was 1 on 21 Sep at Saylorville Res in *Polk* (CJC).

**Eurasian Collared-Dove:** 1 on 10–17 Aug was a first for *Dallas County* (RSS-details). Also reported in *Cerro Gordo*, *Dickinson*, *Kossuth*, *Marion*, *Marshall*, *Monroe*, *Poweshiek*, and *Warren*. The largest groups were 5 on 27 Oct at Ventura in *Cerro Gordo* (Paulette Lugg *fide* PH), and 8 on 11, 12 Nov at Spirit L in *Dickinson* (ET, LAS).

**Mourning Dove:** On 31 Aug, a pair in Garnaville in *Clayton* was observed tending young from their 7th brood on the season (DAk), and 1 that fledged on 10 Oct in *Kossuth* may be the latest date on record (MCK). As many as 100 were seen gathered at cattle lot in *Dickinson* on 11 Aug (MCK).

**Black-billed Cuckoo:** There were 7 reports. The last was 1 on 26 Sep at Wickiup Hill NA in *Linn* (RGo).

**Yellow-billed Cuckoo:** Six observers recorded their last in the final week of Sep: *Pottawattamie* (MO), *Johnson* (CRE, MPr), *Appanoose* (RLC), *Story* (SSP, KLP). Then, a month later, 1 was discovered at Grey Eagle WR in *Wapello* on 23 Oct (AaB).

**GROOVE-BILLED ANI:** 1 found near Ottumwa in *Wapello* on 20 Oct (CH\*) stayed through 24 Oct (RD\*, MCD\*, AaB\*, CRE\*, m.ob.).

**Barn Owl:** One was reported in the city of Armstrong in *Emmet* (Craig Zoellner *vide* PH).

**Long-eared Owl:** The first two reports both occurred on 31 Oct: 1 in *Scott* (DR) and 1 in *Cerro Gordo* (PH). Others were 6 in *Appanoose* on 14 Nov (TJ, RLC, AJ, RIA, PHA), 2 in *Cerro Gordo* on 14, 15 Nov (PH, CJF), 2 in *Johnson* 24–26 Nov (JLF), and 2 in *Linn* 26–28 Nov (BSc, CRE).

**Short-eared Owl:** All: 1 near Sayloville Res in *Polk* 18–22 Oct (DK, JG), 11 on 5 Nov at Owego wetlands in *Woodbury* (GLV), and 2 on 26 Nov at Pleasant Creek RA in *Linn* (BSc).

**Northern Saw-whet Owl:** All: 1 or 2 at George Wyth SP in *Black Hawk* from 30 Oct through the end of the season (AlB, RIA, PHA, KN, JG), 1 on 11 Nov at Pleasant Creek RA in *Linn* (CRE), 1 on 24–26 Nov at Hawkeye WA in *Johnson* (JLF), and 1 on 27 Nov at Breda in *Carroll* (RTh).

**BOREAL OWL:** A report was referred to the Records Committee.

**Common Nighthawk:** The largest groups were 70, 75, and 76 all during 1–5 Sep in *Story* (SSP, KLP), *Woodbury* (GLV), and *Kossuth* (MCK). Last was 1 on 6 Oct at Grammer Grove in *Marshall* (BPr).

**Whip-poor-will:** 7 single birds were reported between 12 Aug and 19 Sep in *Cerro Gordo* (RGo).

**Chimney Swift:** 1,200 were counted on 24 Sep by hawkwatchers at Hitchcock NA in *Pottawattamie* (MO). The last was 1 on 6 Oct at Grammer Grove in *Marshall* (BPr).

**Ruby-throated Hummingbird:** The last was on 1 Oct at a Mason City feeder in *Cerro Gordo* (RGo).

**Red-headed Woodpecker:** 90 on 1 Sep at Hitchcock NA in *Pottawattamie* was a peak (MO). None were reported after 8 seen on 12 Sep in *Johnson* (JPB).

**Yellow-bellied Sapsucker:** 19 reports of 1–6 birds, with the last 1 on 21 Nov in *Johnson* (MCD).

**Northern Flicker:** 4 red- or orange-shafted birds were seen in the extreme west at Hitchcock NA in *Pottawattamie*, where the peak flight of 60 occurred on 1 Oct (MO).

**Pileated Woodpecker:** Noted in wooded areas near the Des Moines R in *Kossuth* (MCK), the So. Skunk R in *Polk* (DK), the Iowa R in *Marshall* (MPr), the Wapsipinicon R in *Linn* (MPr), the Iowa R in *Tama* (MPr), the South R in *Warren* (JG), and the Mississippi R in *Allamakee* (JG).

**Olive-sided Flycatcher:** First few: 1 on 14 Aug in *Pottawattamie* (MO), 1 on 17 Aug in *Marshall* (MPr), 1 on 18 Aug in *Winneshiek* (DeC). Last few: 2 on 19 Sep in *Appanoose* (RLC), 1 on 19 Sep in *Story* (SSP), and 1 on 21 Sep in *Polk* (CJC).

**Eastern Wood-Pewee:** Last: 1 on 6 Oct at Parker's Woods in *Cerro Gordo* (RGo).

**Yellow-bellied Flycatcher:** All: 1 on 20 Aug at Hickory Hill P in *Johnson* (MCD-details), and 1 on 4 Sep also at Hickory Hill (CJC).

**Acadian Flycatcher:** At least 8 birds were still singing on 28 Aug in the Yellow River Forest in *Allamakee* (DAK).

**Alder Flycatcher:** 1 was singing on its route south on 25 Aug at Grammer Grove in *Marshall* (BPr).

**Willow Flycatcher:** On 5 Aug, a few local birds were still around and vocalizing at Two Waters WA in *Worth* (PH).

**Least Flycatcher:** Of ten reports, only two were of singing birds; 1 on 5 Sep in *Marshall* (MPr), and 2 on 26 Sep in *Johnson* (MCK).

**GRAY FLYCATCHER:** A report was referred to the Records Committee.

***Empidonax* species:** There were 12 reports of *Empidonax* flycatchers that were not singing, 11 of which were identified to species anyway. This included a 2nd-latest Alder Flycatcher, and a Willow Flycatcher identified by the same call note used by others to describe the Least Flycatcher voice.

**Eastern Phoebe:** The last two were on 22 Oct at Ada Hayden P in *Story* (WO), and 1 on 25 Oct at Brookside P in *Story* (SSP).

**Great Crested Flycatcher:** Last were 1 on 19 Sep in *Appanoose* (RLC) and 1 on 22 Sep in *Marshall* (MPr).

**Western Kingbird:** The only report was 1 on 6 Sep near the Des Moines airport in *Polk* (CJC).

**Eastern Kingbird:** A big flight took place on 19 Aug when 73 were counted at Hitchcock NA in *Pottawattamie* (MO). Also counts of 30 and 25 were reported by others, but it wasn't clear if these were groups. The last was 1 on 25 Sep at Wickiup in *Linn* (MPr, MCK).

**Scissor-tailed Flycatcher:** There was one carefully described report of a record late individual on 6 Nov in rural Cherokee (Bob Lundquist *fide* Dick Bierman).

**Loggerhead Shrike:** There were 8 reports from *Cerro Gordo* (RGo), *Clay* (LAS), *Grundy* (SSP, KLP), *Johnson* (JLF), *Warren* (JG, RTr), and *Worth* (RGo). The last in the north was 1 on 14 Nov at Dewey's Pasture in *Clay* (LAS).

**Northern Shrike:** First two: 1 on 17 Oct at Saylorville Res in *Polk* (AaB, AJ), and 1 on 18 Oct in *Buena Vista* (LAS). Also reported from *Black Hawk*, *Cerro Gordo*, *Dickinson*, *Linn*, *Mahaska*, *Palo Alto*, *Pottawattamie* and *Story*.

**White-eyed Vireo:** All: 1 on 9 Aug at Sedan Bottoms in *Appanoose* (TJ), 1 on 12 Sep was singing in Stephens St. Forest in *Lucas* (RIA, PHA), and 1 on 19 Sep at Sedan (RLC).

**Bell's Vireo:** All: 2 on 19 Aug in *Bremer* (KN), 1 on 28 Aug at Runnells WA in *Marion* (RLC), 2 on 28 Aug at Cedar Valley in *Black Hawk* (DAK), and 2 on 4 Sep at Somerset BP in *Warren* (RTr).

**Yellow-throated Vireo:** Likely migrants began to be noticed in late August in *Cerro Gordo* (RG), *Polk* (JB), and *Marion* (JG). The most were 7 on 14 Sep in Walnut Woods SP in *Polk* (SSP). The last was 1 on 27 Sep at Hickory Hill P in *Johnson* (DP).

**Blue-headed Vireo:** First: 1 on 9 Sep at Smith WA in *Kossuth* (MCK). Last: 1 on 19 Oct at Brookside P in *Story* (SSP).

**Warbling Vireo:** The last three were on 16 Sep in *Story* (WO), 17 Sep in *Hardin* (MPr), and 21 Sep in *Kossuth* (MCK).

**Philadelphia Vireo:** First: 1 on 29 Aug at Hickory Hill P in *Johnson* (MCD). 71% of the birds reported occurred in the five-day span 25–29 Sep. Last was 1 on 2 Oct at Union Hills in *Cerro Gordo* (RGo).

**Red-eyed Vireo:** There were daily reports in late Sep right up until the last 3 on 29 Sep at Brookside P in *Story* (SSP, KLP).

**Black-billed Magpie:** 3 were seen on 30 Nov flying between isolated trees along 234th Street at Broken Kettle Grasslands in *Plymouth* (GLV).

**Purple Martin:** Up to 275 at a time gathered at Jester Park in *Polk* 14–26 Aug (JJJ, RIA, PHA, JB). The last were on 27 Sep in *Clayton* (DAK).

**Tree Swallow:** Most were 3,300 counted on 2 Oct at Saylorville Res in *Polk* (AaB), and the last was 1 at the same place on 31 Oct (AaB).

**Northern Rough-winged Swallow:** The later of only two reports was 1 on 31 Aug in *Marion* (SSP, KLP).

**Bank Swallow:** All: 3 on 31 Aug in Marion (SSP, KLP), and a few persisted at Ada Hayden Park in *Story* until 24 Sep (WO).

**Cliff Swallow:** All: 250 on 21 Aug at Cardinal Marsh in *Winneshiek* (DeC), and 3 on 12 Sep at Princeton WA in *Scott* (DR).

**Barn Swallow:** 3 were still at Banner WA in *Warren* on 8 Oct (JB).

**Tufted Titmouse:** Reported from *Boone* (SSP, KLP) and *Allamakee* (FL).

**Red-breasted Nuthatch:** The first reports were on 31 Oct in *Johnson* (DP, MCD), and *Hardin* (MPr). On the season, there were 30 reports of 108 birds, with the most being 18 on 26 Sep in a large pine stand at Kent Park in *Johnson* during the IOU annual Fall Meeting (m.ob).

**Brown Creeper:** What were probably the first migrants were 1 on 26 Sep in *Linn* (RGo), 2 on 28 Sep in *Kossuth* (MCK), and 2 on 28 Sep in *Cerro Gordo* (RGo).

**Carolina Wren:** In the south and east permanent residents were reported in *Johnson* (JLF, MCD), *Scott* (DR), and *Warren* (AJ). A pair in Decorah in *Winneshiek* nested in a hanging basket, and were gone by late Sep (Mark Smeby *fide* DeC). Also reported in *Story* (SSP,

KLP), *Clinton* (PVN), *Appanoose* (TJ), and *Woodbury* (GLV).

**Bewick's Wren:** No reports.

**House Wren:** Last: 1 on 25 Oct at Brookside P in *Story* (SSP).

**Winter Wren:** There were 18 reports of 45 birds including 12 on 29 Sep at Smith WA in *Kossuth* (MCK), and 8 on 19 Oct at Brookside P in *Story* (SSP). First reported on several of the IOU Fall Meeting field trips on 25 Sep and at Effigy Mounds in *Allamakee* the same day (DeC). A few hardy birds may overwinter, but there were no fall reports after 1 on 27 Oct at Bacon Creek P in *Woodbury* (GLV).

**Sedge Wren:** Last: 1 very late on 25 Oct at the Doolittle Prairie in *Story* (SSP).

**Marsh Wren:** The most were 32 counted on 28 Sep at Cumming wetlands in *Warren* (JG). Reports were steady up until the last 2 on 19 Oct at Meier WA in *Hardin* (MPr).

**Golden-crowned Kinglet:** The first 2 were found 24 Sep at Algona in *Kossuth* (MCK). The most were 20 out of 48 kinglets counted at Brookside P in *Story* on 28 Sep (SSP, KLP).

**Ruby-crowned Kinglet:** The first was 1 on 16 Sep at Smith WA in *Kossuth* (MCK). The most were 65 on 12 Oct at Brookside P in *Story* (SSP). The last was 1 on 24 Nov at Hooper WA in *Warren* (AaB).

**Blue-gray Gnatcatcher:** The last was 1 on 26 Sep at Fairfield in *Jefferson* (DiP).

**Eastern Bluebird:** 220 were counted Oct 31 migrating past the Hitchcock NA lodge in *Pottawattamie* (MO).

**TOWNSEND'S SOLITAIRE:** There were two reports of record-early birds, on 10 Sep in *Pottawattamie* (MO\*) and 12 Sep in *Clay* (LAS\*), and a third on 24 Oct also in *Clay* (LAS\*).

**Veery:** The last were 2 on 6 Sep at Hickory Hill P in *Johnson* (MCD, BSc).

**Gray-cheeked Thrush:** All: 1 on 16 Sep in *Story* (SSP), 1 on 25 Sep in *Allamakee* (FL), 1 on 25 Sep in *Linn* (MCK), and the last on 28 Sep in *Story* (SSP-details, KLP).

**Swainson's Thrush:** First: 1 on 20 Aug in Brookside P in *Story* (SSP-details, KLP). Last: 2 on 28 Sep at Parker's Woods in *Cerro Gordo* (RGo). On 16 Sep 27 were identified by their flight notes during a pre-dawn count of birds passing over Ames (SSP).

**Hermit Thrush:** 19 individuals suddenly appeared at five locations on 28, 29 Sep (RGo, MCK, MPr, SSP, KLP). 8 on 16 Oct at Starr's Cave in *Des Moines* (CRE) gave this year's field report its only data from that county. Other high counts were 8 on 14 Oct in *Boone* (JJD), 11 on 28 Oct in *Kossuth* (MCK), and 25 on 28 Oct in *Story* (SSP, KLP).

**Wood Thrush:** The last two were 1 on 28 Sep at Call SP in *Kossuth* (MCK), and 2 on 2 Oct at Woodland Mounds in *Warren* (JG).

**American Robin:** 6,800 streamed past the Hitchcock NA lodge in *Pottawattamie* on 31 Oct (MO).

**Varied Thrush:** A dead bird was picked up from roadside at Webster City in *Hamilton* on the record-early date of 6 Oct (Wayne Fuhlbrugge *fide* JJD). The specimen became part of the ISU collection.

**Gray Catbird:** Last was 1 on 8 Oct at Sedan Bottoms in *Appanoose* (RCL).

**Northern Mockingbird:** All: 2 on 5 Sep in rural *Wayne* (AaB), and 1 on 8 Oct at Sandbar Slough in *Dickinson* (LAS).

**Brown Thrasher:** Last: 1 loyal bird finally left a *Cerro Gordo* yard on 2 Nov (RGo).

**European Starling:** An enormous mixed flock estimated to contain 105,000 Starlings on 3 Nov was observed flying in to roost at Anderson L in *Hamilton* (SSP, KLP).

**American Pipit:** First noticed in southern Iowa, with 4 on 26 Sep at Runnells WA in *Polk* (AaB), and 1 on 3 Oct at Banner WA in *Warren* (JG). About half of the 16 reports from 8 counties were of flocks of 20–50 birds. The most were 100 estimated to make up the pipit-content of a huge longspur flock on 3 Nov in *Polk* (JG).

**BOHEMIAN WAXWING:** One was in the company of Cedar Waxwings at Sheldon Cemetery in *O'Brien* on 13 Nov (LAS\*). A flock of 7 found on 21 Nov at Spirit L in *Dickinson* was refound on 28 Nov (ET\*).

**Cedar Waxwing:** A flock of 650 was noted on 14 Nov in *Appanoose* (TJ, RLC).

**Blue-winged Warbler:** Seen repeatedly at Hickory Hill P in *Johnson* during 26 Aug–26 Sep (DP, MCD, DAK, BSc). All others: 14 on 28 Aug in the Yellow River Forest in *Allamakee* (DAK), and 1 on 4 Sep at Burr Oak in *Winneshiek* (DeC).

**Golden-winged Warbler:** There were 10 reports of 1–3 birds, with the first 1 on 23 Aug at Parker's Woods in *Cerro Gordo* (RGo). The last two were at Pinicon P in *Linn* on 25 Sep (SSP, KLP, MPr), and 1 at Hickory Hill P in *Johnson* on 27 Sep (DP).

**Tennessee Warbler:** First: 2 on 19 Aug at Brookside P in *Story* (SSP, KLP). Most reports were clustered in the last few days of September, but one very late bird was found on 19 Oct in *Hardin* (MPr).

**Orange-crowned Warbler:** First few: 1 on 14 Sep in *Linn* (DP), 1 on 16 Sep in *Kossuth* (MCK). Reported widely, from 12 counties. Last: 1 on 21 Oct in *Story* (WO).

**Nashville Warbler:** First: 1 on 19 Aug in *Story* (SSP, KLP). Peak: 43 were reported over 4 counties 25, 26 Sep (SSP, BFH, CRE, FL). Last: 1 on 19 Oct in *Story* (SSP).

**Northern Parula:** There were six reports of 1 or 2 up through 28 Sep (DEC). Then, a very late bird was photographed on 24 Oct in Mason City in *Cerro Gordo* (PH). [2nd-latest].

**Yellow Warbler:** Last two: 1 on 20 Sep in *Story* (SSP), and 1 on 26 Sep in *Linn* (MPr).

**Chestnut-sided Warbler:** First were 2 on 19 Aug at Brookside P in *Story* (SSP, KLP), away from summer locations in the east (Dinsmore 2004). Reported from 9 counties. Last was 1 on 5 Oct at Eagle Point in *Clinton* (PVN).

**Magnolia Warbler:** The first 17 were clustered on 29, 30 Sep, split between Hickory Hill P in *Johnson* (DP, DAK) and Parker's Woods in *Cerro Gordo* (RGo). The last was 1 on 9 Oct in *Marshall* (MPr), 11 days later than the previous one.

**Cape May Warbler:** All: 1 on 14 Sep at Walnut Woods SP in *Polk* (SSP), 1 on 25 Sep at Pinicon County P in *Linn* (SSp, MPr), 4 on 25 Sep at Hawkeye WA in *Johnson* (RGo, MCK), 2 on 26 Sep at Kent P in *Johnson* (SSP, KLP), 1 on 1 Oct at Pine Lake SP in *Hardin* (MPr), and 2 on 6 Oct at Hawkeye WA in *Johnson* (THK, JLF).

**Black-throated Blue Warbler:** All: a female was at Eagle Point in *Clinton* on 7 Sep (PVN), 2 males were at Hickory Hill P in *Johnson* on 25–27 Sep (MCD, JG, DP, CJC), a female was at Kent P in *Johnson* on 27 Sep (SSP, KLP), and another female was a Brookside P in *Story* 2 Oct (SSP, KLP).

**Yellow-rumped Warbler:** First: 1 on 24 Aug in Spirit L in *Dickinson* (ET). Multiple high counts of about 40 individuals occurred in October (RLC, MO). The last of many reports was 1 on 14 Nov in *Appanoose* (TJ, RLC).

**Black-throated Green Warbler:** First: 1 on 25 Aug at Grammer Grove in *Marshall* (MPr). Never abundant, this warbler was reported 16 times steadily through until the last on 8 Oct at Oakland Cemetery in *Johnson* (MCD).

**Blackburnian Warbler:** The first two were found on 19 Aug: 1 at Hickory Hill P in *Johnson* (MCD) and 1 at Parker's Woods in *Cerro Gordo* (RGo). There were 16 reports of 1–3 birds, with the last on 1 Oct in *Johnson* (JPB).

**Pine Warbler:** After nesting in the extreme SE (Dinsmore 2004), this species made two fall appearances, both in the NW, one day apart. 1 was at Spirit L in *Dickinson* on 28 Sep (DEC), and 2 were in Algona on 29 Sep (MCK-details).

**Palm Warbler:** Late again, the first didn't arrive until 25 Sep in *Linn* (MPr). There were 7 reports, with the last on 12 Oct at Brookside P in *Story* (SSP).

**Bay-breasted Warbler:** First: 1 on 19 Aug at Brookside P in *Story* (SSP, KLP). There were 14 reports with the last 1 on 11 Oct at Cardinal Marsh in *Winneschiek* (DeC).

**Blackpoll Warbler:** All: 1 on 16 Sep at Lake Meyer in *Winneschiek* (DeC), 1 on 26 Sep in *Linn* (RGo), and a very late adult basic on 9 Oct near Clear Lake in *Cerro Gordo* (PH) [2nd-latest].

**Cerulean Warbler:** All: An immature was at Brookside P in *Story* on 19 Aug (SSP, KLP).

**Black-and-white Warbler:** First: 1 on 19 Aug in *Johnson* (MCD), and 2 on 19 Aug in *Story* (SSP, KLP). There were two peaks, one in late August, and another in late September. The last was 1 on 29 Sep at Brookside P in *Story* (SSP, KLP).

**American Redstart:** Last: 2 on 29 Sep at Brookside P in *Story* (SSP, KLP).

**Ovenbird:** Last: 1 on 30 Sep at Cedar Rapids in *Linn* (DP).

**Northern Waterthrush:** First: 1 at USNWR in *Kossuth* (RGo). There were six reports, with the last 1 on 18 Sep at Lundy Acres in *Warren* (AaB).

**Mourning Warbler:** First: 1 on 19 Aug at Hickory Hill P in *Johnson* (MCD). Nine of ten reports were from the eastern half of Iowa. The last was the lone western

report at Spirit L in *Dickinson* on 28 Sep (DEC).

**Common Yellowthroat:** Last: 1 on 1 Oct at Meier WA in *Hardin* (MPr).

**Hooded Warbler:** An immature was found along the Skunk R in *Story* on 6 Sep, the latest date on record (SSP-details, KLP-details).

**Wilson's Warbler:** First: 1 on 19 Aug at Burr Oak in *Winneshiek* (DeC). Last: 1 on 25 Sep at Pinicon County P in *Linn* (SSP, KLP).

**Canada Warbler:** First found at three locations on 19 Aug: Hickory Hill P in *Johnson* (MCD), Grammer Grove in *Marshall* (MPr), and Parker's Woods in *Cerro Gordo* (RGo). This was the most often-reported warbler of the fall, with 24 reports over ten counties totaling 45 birds. The last was 1 on 19 Sep at Fairfield in *Jefferson* (DiP).

**Scarlet Tanager:** The last two were on 27 Sep at Fairfield in *Jefferson* (DiP), and 28 Sep at Call SP in *Kossuth* (MCK).

**Spotted Towhee:** All 5 appeared in the same week: 1 on 7 Oct at McIntosh WA in *Cerro Gordo* (RGo), 1 on 9 Oct at Sedan in *Appanoose* (RLC), and 3 on 11–15 Oct at Hitchcock NA in *Pottawattamie* (DP, MO, AaB).

**American Tree Sparrow:** First two: 1 on 17 Oct at Ada Hayden P in *Story* (WO), 1 on 24 Oct at Trumbull L in *Clay* (LAS). Before the month was out, 35 were found at Cardinal Marsh in *Winneshiek* (DAK).

**Chipping Sparrow:** Last was 1 on 4 Nov in *Story* (WO).

**Clay-colored Sparrow:** 2 on 12 Sep at Little Sioux WA in *Clay* were judged to be 1 adult and 1 juvenile (LAS). Other reports, from 29 Sep–16 Oct, contained no details.

**Field Sparrow:** The last, on 31 Oct in *Clayton* (DAK), was 19 days later than the previous two.

**Vesper Sparrow:** The last was the only November report, on 7 Nov in *Cerro Gordo* (RGo).

**Lark Sparrow:** All: 1–3 on 1 Aug at Ada Hayden P in *Story* (SSP, WO). 14 were counted on 4 Sep at Hawkeye WA in *Johnson* (MCD). A few were seen intermittently at Ada Hayden P until the last on 6 Sep (WO).

**Savannah Sparrow:** Began to concentrate in late October. Up to 200 were counted at Owego wetlands in *Woodbury* on 24 Oct (BFH).

**Le Conte's Sparrow:** The first two were 1 on 19 Sep at Sedan in *Appanoose* (RLC), and 1 on 20 Sep at Doolittle Prairie in *Story* (SSP). Also reported at locations in *Cerro Gordo*, *Clay*, *Dickinson*, *Greene*, *Kossuth*, *Madison*, *Marshall*, *Pottawattamie*, *Scott* and *Woodbury*. The most were 15 on 24 Oct at Owego wetlands in *Woodbury* (BFH), and the last were 8 still at the same location.

**Nelson's Sharp-tailed Sparrow:** First few: 1 on 17 Sep at Goose L in *Clinton* (PVN), and 3 on 19 Sep at Dean in *Appanoose* (RLC). All of 13 reports away from Sedan Bottoms were of 1–4 birds. At Sedan (Dean) in *Appanoose*, numbers peaked at 20 on 9 Sep (RLC, TJ). The last was 1 on 13 Oct at Hawkeye WA in *Johnson* (DP, KN).

**Fox Sparrow:** On 28 Sep, 3 appeared in *Kossuth* (MCK), and 1 in *Story* (SSP). Reports of small numbers continued until late October, and then 80% of all birds reported occurred in the week 24–31 Oct. The last was 1 on 20 Nov at Ada Hayden P in *Story* (WO).

**Lincoln's Sparrow:** First: 1 on 18 Sep at Fairfield in *Jefferson* (DiP). As many as 13 were at Jensen Marsh in *Madison* on 9 Oct (RTr). The last was 1 on 3 Nov at Ada Hayden P in *Story* (WO).

**Swamp Sparrow:** Clusters of 30–48 were reported in heavy marsh habitat in October at Snake Creek Marsh in *Greene* (CJC), Cardinal Marsh in *Winneshiek* (DeC, DAK), and Sedan Bottoms in *Appanoose* (TJ, RLC). No reports after October.

**White-throated Sparrow:** The first two were 1 at Grammer Grove in *Marshall* on 22 Sep (MPr), and 1 in Mason City on 23 Sep (RGo).

**Harris's Sparrow:** The first few were 2 on 28 Sep at Amana L in *Iowa* (CJC) and 2 on 29 Sep in Algona in *Kossuth* (MCK). Last: 16 were found at the State Forest Nursery in *Story* on 31 Oct (SSP, KLP).

**White-crowned Sparrow:** All: 1 on 28 Sep at Call SP in *Kossuth* (MCK), 1 on 29 Sep at Fairfield in *Jefferson* (DiP), and 5 on 7 Oct at Grammer Grove in *Marshall* (MPr).

**Dark-eyed Junco:** First noticed on 28 Sep in several locations: 2 at Fairfield in *Jefferson* (DiP), 2 at Parker's Woods in *Cerro Gordo* (RGo), 2 in the Shellrock Greenbelt in *Cerro Gordo* (RGo), and 3 in Brookside P in *Story* (SSP). 4 made it to Algona the next day (MCK). 1 Oregon Junco was reported 24 Oct in *Story* (SSP).

**Lapland Longspur:** First was a group of 13 on 20 Oct at Welp WA in *Kossuth* (MCK). By early November, flocks of 200–600 birds were being found in *Cerro Gordo* (PH, RGo), *Marshall* (BPr), *Hamilton* (SSP), *Story* (WO) and *Polk* (JG).

**Smith's Longspur:** All: 5 on 2 Oct at Union Hills WPA in *Cerro Gordo* (PH, RGo) and 13 there on 26, 27 Oct (RGo, PH); 10 on 10 Oct at Welp WPA in *Kossuth* (MCK); 5 on 29 Oct on private property in *Cerro Gordo* (RGo) increased to 19 by 1 Nov, and dwindled back to 5 on 8 Nov (RGo, PH), which were the last.

**Snow Bunting:** First few: 3 on 3 Nov at Saylorville in *Polk* (DK), and 2 on 4 Nov at Grammer Grove in *Marshall* (E. & E. Armstrong *fide* MPr). Also noted in November at Pleasant Creek RA in *Linn* (CJC, BSc), Coralville Res (JLF, THK), along the Mississippi R in *Dubuque* (JG), and in *Linn* (DP).

**McKAY'S BUNTING:** A report was referred to the Records Committee.

**Rose-breasted Grosbeak:** The last few were seen 26 Sep in *Jefferson* (DiP) and *Johnson* (MCK).

**Blue Grosbeak:** All: 1 on 8 Aug at Mid American Energy Ponds in *Pottawattamie* (THK), 1 on 25 Aug at Hitchcock NA in *Pottawattamie* (MO), and 2 on 28 Aug at Owego wetlands in *Woodbury* (GLV).

**Indigo Bunting:** The last few were 1 on 25 Sep at Pool 9 in *Allamakee* (FL), and 2 on 26 Sep at Heron Bend in *Lee* (CRE).

**Dickcissel:** Late singles were reported on 6 Sep in *Winneshiek* (DeC), 11 Sep in *Story* (WO), and 20 Sep in *Story* (SSP).

**Bobolink:** No reports.

**Red-winged Blackbird:** On 5 Oct, about 500,000 birds judged to be mostly Red-winged Blackbirds were seen coming in to the Hawkeye WA in *Johnson* to roost at dusk (CRE). "They were flying past in dense, continuous streams of birds from the southwest to the northeast, filled the trees and settled down into the marshes by the thousands." – CRE. Another enormous mixed flock of about 500,000 and estimated to contained 95,000 Red-winged Blackbirds was seen descending on Anderson L in *Hamilton* at dusk on 3 Nov.

**Eastern Meadowlark:** 1 was still singing on 29 Sep in *Jefferson* (DiP).



**Western Meadowlark:** 1 was identified by voice on 2 Oct at Union Hills in *Cerro Gordo* (PH). 12 meadowlarks near Grimes in *Polk* on 20 Nov were probably Westerns (JB).

**Yellow-headed Blackbird:** The last were 2 found at Clear Lake in *Cerro Gordo* on 31 Oct (PH).

**Rusty Blackbird:** The first were 5 on 6 Oct at Banner WA in *Warren* (JG). Also seen in *Cerro Gordo* (RGo), *Pottawattamie* (MO), *Winneshiek* (DeC), *Polk* (JG), *Woodbury* (BFH), *Tama* (MPr), *Story* (WO), and *Hamilton* (SSP, KLP). About 1000 passed by the Hitchcock NA lodge on 22 Nov (MO).

**Brewer's Blackbird:** All: 3 on 27 Oct in *Keokuk* (JLF), 10 on 27 Oct in *Wapello* (THK-details), 150 on 3 Nov in *Kossuth* were the most ever seen by that observer (MCK-details), and 70 on 18 Nov in *Pottawattamie* (MO).

**Common Grackle:** An estimate of 140,000 was made from a mixed flock of about 500,000 streaming into Anderson L in *Hamilton* at dusk on 3 Nov (SSP, KLP).

**Great-tailed Grackle:** 45 on 23 Aug made a first record for *Union* (JJJ). Other groups were 38 on 6 Oct in *Dickinson* (PH), and 25 on 1 Nov at L Manawa in *Pottawattamie* (LJP, BKP), which was also the last.

**Brown-headed Cowbird:** ~45,000 were part of a huge mixed flock at Anderson L in *Hamilton* on 3 Nov (SSP, KLP).

**Orchard Oriole:** No reports.

**Baltimore Oriole:** The last was 1 on 5 Sep at Brookside P in *Story* (SSP, KLP).

**Purple Finch:** The first of many reports was a pair on 9 Sep in *Clayton* (DAK). Groups of 10–30 were reported in *Cerro Gordo* (CJF), *Clayton* (DAK), *Dickinson* (ET), *Kossuth* (MCK) and *Winneshiek* (DeC).

**Red Crossbill:** All: 1 on 19 Aug at Burr Oak in *Winneshiek* (Lee Zieke *fide* DeC), 1 on 26 Sep at Amana Lily Pond in *Iowa* (JSc), 3 on 10 Oct at Clear Lake in *Cerro Gordo* (CFJ, RGo), 1 on 16–18 Nov in *Palo Alto* (Carol Peaslee-photo *fide* LAS), and 1 on 21 Nov at Hooper WA in *Warren* (JF).

**White-winged Crossbill:** A group of 8 on 7 Nov at Lake Park Cemetery in *Dickinson* (LAS) was the only report.

**Pine Siskin:** Arrived unusually early and often. The first few of 32 reports were 2 on 10 Sep at Hitchcock NA in *Pottawattamie* (MO), and 1 in Algona in *Kossuth* the next day (MCK). Flock size continued to increase, and the high count was also the last report before the calendar said the season was over: 40 birds on 29 Nov at Lake Meyer in *Winneshiek* (Larry Reis *fide* DeC).

**Eurasian Tree Sparrow:** All: 8 on 25 Sep at Indian Sl in *Louisa* (MCD), 1 on 9 Oct at Iowa City in *Johnson* (MCD), and 7 on 28 Nov at Hills Cemetery in *Johnson* (JF).

## COMMENT

This report was written from a database of 2,484 records contributed by 73 people. The 60 people listed below contributed information directly to the IOU, and another 13 contributed indirectly through those 59. I hope this summary article captures a coherent picture painted by those 2,484 records, and accurately reflects the detail and care taken by so many. Hundreds of accompanying comments, especially by Dennis Carter, Jim Dinsmore, Mike Dooley, Chris Edwards, Matt Kenne, Tom Kent, Mark Orsag, Shane Patterson, Mark Proescholdt and just about everyone else, make the defining brush strokes of that picture. Ann Johnson spent many hours adjusting, testing, and improving

the electronic reporting system that stores and manipulates the huge database of information. Thanks to Rita Goranson who assisted in the preparation of this article.

These records came from 63 of Iowa's 99 counties, with 74% of the information derived from the 10 counties of *Polk, Johnson, Story, Pottawattamie, Kossuth, Cerro Gordo, Linn, Appanoose, Marshall, and Marion*. In fact, a mere four locations in the state accounted for 25% of all reports: Saylorville Reservoir, Hitchcock Nature Area, Hawkeye Wildlife Area, and Union Slough National Wildlife Refuge. September generated 33% of the reports although it is only one of four fall months. The two individual days with the most reports were the two days of the IOU Fall Meeting. We should meet more often.

#### CONTRIBUTORS

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Ray Cummins	RLC	Centerville	Shane Patterson	SSP	Ames
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Tom Johnson	TJ	Mystic	Linda Turner	LTu	Des Moines
Mike Johnston	MWJ	Waterloo	Paul Van Nieuwenhuysen	PVN	Dewitt
Chaiyan Kasornrorkbua	CK	Ames	Gerald Von Ehwegen	GLV	Sioux City

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#### LITERATURE CITED

Dinsmore, J. J. 2004. Field Reports — Summer 2004. *Iowa Bird Life* 74:136–150.

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*Tundra Swans among more than 9,000 at Mississippi River Pool No. 9, Allamakee Co., 26 Nov 2004. Photograph by Jay Gilliam, Norwalk, IA.*



*Snowy Egret, Shetler R.A. ponds below Saylorville Res., Polk Co., 11 Oct 2004. Last seen on late date of 23 Oct 2004. Photograph by Jay Gilliam, Norwalk, IA.*



*Northern Saw-whet Owl, George Wyth State Park, Black Hawk Co., 28 Nov 2004. Photograph by Jay Gilliam, Norwalk, IA.*



*Black-headed Gull, north end of Spirit Lake, Dickinson Co., 9 Oct 2004. Photograph by Jay Gilliam, Norwalk, IA.*



*Short-eared Owl, Lakeview R.A., Saylorville Res., Polk Co., 22 Oct 2004. Photograph by Jay Gilliam, Norwalk, IA.*

## **Hitchcock Nature Area Hawk Watch Report, Fall 2004**

*Mark Orsag, Jerry Toll, and Phylisha Eshelman*

What a year 2004 was! We logged nearly 700 hours (694) — the most ever. We counted an unprecedented 11,953 raptors and vultures and, in the course of the season, shattered record after record. For the second straight year, the Pottawattamie County Conservation Board funded a part-time hawk counter. Jerry Toll had filled the role in 2003 and Phylisha Eshelman took over in 2004. We recorded twenty species of raptors this season with rarities such as Ferruginous Hawk and Prairie Falcon putting in multiple appearances. The bird of the year, however, was a Gyrfalcon seen on 25 Oct, which was new for Hitchcock. To top it all off, the Governor of Iowa recognized the hawk watchers for their outstanding volunteer service with the presentation of the Governor's Volunteer Award (for which we are grateful to Pat Schlarbaum for nominating us) to the hawk watch. The hawk watch also received some good publicity this year from an article that appeared in the *Omaha World Herald*.

Jerry Toll, who had distinguished himself as the paid hawk counter in 2003, started out the 2004 season on 11 Aug with an unremarkable flight of four raptors and vultures.

Flights on the 15th and 18th were also in the single digits, but counts on the 14th, 19th, and 20th produced extraordinarily strong early counts of 39, 44, and 76 raptors and vultures. These numbers gave the first real hint that 2004 was not going to be an “ordinary” season in any way. As expected, immature Turkey Vultures dominated these early flights with a sprinkling of early-moving raptors mixed in — an Osprey, three Mississippi Kites, an American Kestrel, and three Northern Harriers along with immature Cooper’s and Red-tailed Hawks. All three of these flights occurred on fairly calm, sunny days with excellent thermalling conditions. When the light winds were blowing, they were from the north-west or southwest. Westerly winds are a key component of good Hitchcock flights — a trend that in 2004 would be more marked than ever. The 20th also marked the counting debut of Phylisha Eshelman (a recent graduate of Iowa State University’s zoology and animal ecology programs), who would lead the Hitchcock hawk watch as the 2004 paid hawk counter. Phylisha, who would not officially “punch the clock” until 1 Sep, quickly impressed Hitchcock’s experienced volunteers with her diligence, enthusiasm, and amazingly rapid mastery of the fine art of raptor identification. She would prove adept at the education component of her hawk watching duties as well.

The surprisingly good early push of vulture and raptor migrants was not accompanied by strong flights of nonraptors; Eastern Kingbirds and Chimney Swifts (as expected) were on the move, but hardly in impressive numbers. The 19th was the best early non-raptor day with 196 American White Pelicans and the first-ever Willet for Hitchcock the highlights. Two Caspian Terns powered right over the lodge on the 20th — a good, but hardly unexpected, sighting. Five days of counting between the 21st and the 26th produced steady numbers of raptors and vultures for Aug with totals mostly in the teens and twenties. No new raptor species for the season were logged over this span, but Ospreys appeared steadily with highs of three on both the 24th and 26th. This would turn out to be a preview of surprising things to come later in the fall. American White Pelicans, Eastern Kingbirds, Red-headed Woodpeckers, and Chimney Swifts were, as usual, the dominant nonraptor migrants. Once again, however, their numbers were not strong. Other migrants or lingering residents seen around the lodge or Badger Hill (as opposed to flying past) included several Scarlet Tanagers, a Blue-gray Gnatcatcher, and a Blue Grosbeak away from its usual haunts on the floodplain below Hitchcock. Five Great Blue Herons powered south past counters on the 24th.

An unusually strong early cold front popped through toward the end of Aug, triggering yet another good early push of raptors. Counts during the three-day span, between the 27th and 29th, averaged 40 raptors and vultures per day — strong numbers indeed for August. Sharp-shinned Hawk (3) and Swainson’s Hawk (1) made their fall 2004 Hitchcock debuts on the 27th as part of a nine-species, 44-raptor flight. The surprises of that day were, however, a record early Bald Eagle and three Great Egrets seen by Don Paseka and Jerry Toll. American White Pelicans pushed through in the hundreds on each of the three days, the first Double-crested Cormorants of the season were seen, and two more Caspian Terns flew by on the 28th. Raptor flights were, as expected, more varied (and less vulture-dominated) with the passing front — Ospreys and Cooper’s Hawks moved through on all three days. Yet another early Bald Eagle turned up on the 28th; American Kestrels moved south strongly on the 27th (7) with Northern Harriers putting in a good early showing on the 28th (5). With no counters present on the 30th and 31st, the part-time portion of the season was over. Full-time counting would begin 1 Sep. Due

to the amazing diligence of Phylisha and the great effort of the “Hitchcock regulars” as well as that of new volunteers, the watch would be staffed every day from 1 Sep through 21 Dec!

With a record 388 raptors and vultures recorded in Aug, there was hope among Hitchcock volunteers that Sep would get off to an extraordinarily fast start, but it did not. Winds were mostly out of the south and southeast with temperatures still in the 80s. Raptor flights were, for the first five days of the month, fairly typical for the first week of September. Turkey Vultures moved through in solid early numbers on the 3rd, 4th, and 5th, with the season’s first Broad-winged Hawk appearing on the 4th. Nonraptor flights began to pick up as Red-headed Woodpeckers (near their traditional peak time), Chimney Swifts, and American White Pelicans posted good if unexceptional showings. A weak low pressure system began to move through on Sep 5. By the 6th, the winds had shifted from southeast to northwest as the back side of the low passed. Temperatures only dropped to 80, and the winds only topped out at 15 mph, but it was enough to produce a diverse, if far from high volume, flight of 42 raptors and vultures. Highlights of the day included the season’s first Merlin, and a record-early *Prairie Falcon* found by Loren Padelford. The nonraptor flight on the 6th was composed of American White Pelicans (542), Double-crested Cormorants (290), Chimney Swifts (100), and Red-headed Woodpeckers (76).

The next three days featured light winds, little change in the weather (mostly easterly or southerly winds), and few migrating raptors. High temperatures were about 80 degrees and raptor counts averaged fewer than 24 raptors and vultures per day. The 10th was even warmer, but the south winds were stronger at 10 to 20 mph and shifted to west-southwest in the afternoon. Conditions and the fact that mid-Sep was now at hand seemed to indicate that vultures would be more seriously on the move, and the big ugly birds did not disappoint. Eighty-nine Turkey Vultures were counted that day by Carr Heaney, Don Paseka, and Mark Orsag; this push led to the 2004 season’s first triple digit day with a total count of 111 raptors and vultures. The day also featured some good sightings. A juvenile Mississippi Kite, tacking into the wind and sailing south with only an occasional flap, passed “slow and low” over the lodge in the afternoon. Two early Pine Siskins were also seen near the lodge, and a young *Townsend’s Solitaire* was the day’s closing highlight as it flitted past after alighting briefly in front of the lodge. Mark Orsag and Sue Mattix experienced a rather slow flight the next day with lighter southerly winds and only a strong Osprey flight of 12 as a highlight.

The 12th saw continued warming with a high of 87. As the sun baked down and the heat built though the day, wind strength increased greatly in the early afternoon; winds were again southerly to occasionally south-southeasterly and gusting to 30 mph. It was a Sunday and volunteer counters Jim Meyer, Mark Orsag, Pat Williams, and Sandy Reinken were on hand anticipating another “pretty good” vulture day with the strong southerly winds. Both the lodge and the Prairie Overlook watch points were staffed. What followed was one of the more entertaining early season days in Hitchcock history. With the slight southeasterly component in the wind, it was a particularly strong day for the counters stationed at the Prairie Overlook — one hour in the early afternoon produced 57 raptors and vultures at the overlook. The birds were tacking through low into the wind — 50 feet or so over the counters’ heads. This afforded great looks, but with the northward views at both the lodge and the Prairie Overlook somewhat restricted, counters had limited time to glass the low altitude raptors. Fortunately, Hitchcock Land Manager Chad Graeve,

monitoring the radio traffic between the two watch points, was able to drop in and help count when the counters were at their busiest. The day's final tally was 10 species of raptors (243) and vultures. This flight was dominated by Turkey Vultures (133), Ospreys (35), and immature Red-tailed Hawks (31). The Osprey total was just one short of the old day record of 36, set back in 2000. Buteo morphs appeared for the first time in fall 2004 on the 12th as well — Krider's and Harlan's Red-taileds, a dark morph Broad-winged, and a well-seen rufous morph Swainson's Hawk late in the day that labored past the Prairie Overlook flapping hard. Five Peregrine Falcons of the *tundrius* variety were counted on the 12th as well. It was quite a day!

The next two days produced declining counts as temperatures soared into the 90s on 13 Sep and then the much-dreaded easterly winds made their presence felt on the 14th. Nonraptor flights had continued to trend toward the unimpressive during the second week of Sep with only a trickle of Chimney Swifts, Red-headed Woodpeckers, and American White Pelicans coming through. There was a sharp drop in temperatures on the 15th as a cold front moved through. Conditions remained cloudy, however, and north-west winds accompanying the change were modest, with gusts only reaching 17 mph. A flight of 94 raptors and vultures of nine species were observed by Phylisha Eshelman and Loren and Babs Padelford. Two Bald Eagles were its highlight, while nonraptor movement on the day was also modest with only American White Pelicans (163) putting in much of a showing.

The first half of Sep was over. It had featured few strong fronts and a fairly "steady-state" weather pattern with high temperatures mostly still in the 80s. The nonraptor flight had been poor. Nonetheless, the raptor and vulture flight had been strong — perhaps because the less than ideal conditions had given migration-bent raptors more time and reason to collect in and utilize (particularly on south-wind days) the Loess Hills.

During the next five days, the warming trend continued with highs in the mid-80s to mid-90s. Most days were sunny and the prevailing wind direction during the span was southeasterly. The better days occurred when winds gusted to 15 mph or more. Flights during the five-day span topped 100+ four times, with the best day (260) coming on 19 Sep. All the flights were dominated by Turkey Vultures — an expected result given the time of year and the prevailing southeasterlies. Nonraptor flights between the 16th and the 20th were singularly unimpressive with some Chimney Swifts and American White Pelicans trickling through as well as the first appearance of small flocks of Blue Jays and a couple of swirling kettles of Franklin's Gulls. On the 20th, a Ruby-throated Hummingbird buzzed by the lodge deck.

A liftoff of a "tornado" of 135 Turkey Vultures was observed by Clem Klaphake on the 16th, but the rest of that day proved painfully slow as winds were light and out of the east. Southerly winds produced some mid-day movement the next day, but a switch to east-southeast left counters Phylisha Eshelman and Mark Orsag staring at birdless skies later in the afternoon. Southeast winds blowing at a steady 5 to 15 mph produced a vulture-dominated flight of 106 birds of eight species the next day for Sue Mattix, Mary Kramer, Pat Williams, and Sandy Reinken, with the day's highlight being a close-in Merlin.

The 19th was a Sunday with even stronger south-southeast winds and roasting temperatures in the 90s. Nonetheless, experience had taught us to expect a good day in such conditions, and we were not disappointed. Birds moved steadily from 10:30 AM until 4 PM, with Turkey Vultures straggling through slowly in loose groups. Over them, under them,

or around them glided or flapped nearly 100 raptors of eight species. There were 43 Sharp-shinned Hawks, 25 Red-tailed Hawks, 13 Broad-wingeds, six Peregrine Falcons, and a Merlin among them. Many of these birds passed very close to the Badger Hill watch point. The totally unexpected find of the day, however, was seen only from the lodge. A record-early light-morph immature Ferruginous Hawk circled overhead twice as counters Jerry Toll, Sandy Reinken, and Pat Williams looked upward in amazement. It then powered off to the east, defying the efforts of the Badger Hill watchers to spot it. By the end of the day, the raptor/vulture count stood at 260, another very strong result. South winds continued the next day at slightly diminished intensities. Late in the day, the feared east-southeast component reappeared once again leading to a dramatic slowdown. These mixed conditions produced 112 total birds (with 80 of them being Turkey Vultures) for Phylisha, Loren and Babs Padelford, and Jerry Toll.

After a rainout day on 21 Sep, Jerry Toll and Phylisha staffed the watch on the 22nd for another solid flight of 122 raptors and vultures of eight species moving through low on updrafts caused by moderate southeast winds that averaged about 10 mph. The 23rd dawned cooler (with a high of 73) and rainy. After two hours the clouds broke, however, and brisk southwest winds (10 to 15 mph) prevailed. By 7 PM, when the watch closed down, Phylisha, Clem, Jim Meyer, and Jerry Toll (assisted at times by rangers Chad Graeve and Brett Ford and a number of visitors) had enjoyed what Phylisha described as “a great day”; they had seen 198 raptors and vultures of no less than 13 species. The highlights were a new single-day-record 39 Ospreys, an early adult Golden Eagle, two Merlins, and no less than 10 Peregrine Falcons. The nonraptor flight had again been modest and dominated by Chimney Swifts and American White Pelicans.

Three more strong flights followed on the 24th (211), 25th (319), and 26th (257). Turkey Vultures continued to move through steadily, and small kettles of Swainson’s and Broad-winged Hawks appeared. The three flights were quite diverse with 12 raptor/vulture species appearing on the first two days, and 11 appearing on the 26th. A Merlin and four Peregrines highlighted the flight on the 24th. Two Mississippi Kites, a Red-shouldered Hawk, a Merlin, and a dark-morph Broad-winged were among the sightings on the 25th. A rare light-morph Harlan’s Red-tailed Hawk, another Red-shouldered Hawk, and a Merlin were notable raptors on the 26th. Raptors and vultures were accompanied on these days by flights of Chimney Swifts, American White Pelicans, Double-crested Cormorants, Franklin’s Gulls, and Blue Jays. Most notable were the huge numbers of American White Pelicans (6,894) that kettled and streamed by over the Missouri River valley on the 25th. None of the counters present that day could recall having seen a pelican flight quite like that at Hitchcock before.

The 24th and 25th had seen calm conditions and 26 Sep had brought a modest southeast wind and warmer temperatures. What was described as a very weak cold Pacific front was supposed to pass through late in the afternoon of the 27th. Winds in the morning were light and out of the south; the sky was cloudy and there was little raptor movement for counters Phylisha Eshelman and Jim Meyer. Suddenly (about noon) the winds switched to the northwest, clouds began to race across the sky — the front had arrived early and was packing unexpectedly strong winds. Almost immediately, Phylisha and Jim spotted a formation of 150 Swainson’s Hawks that glided rapidly overhead. More hawks followed and the winds began to blow harder. Help arrived as other counters, feeling the temperatures drop into the 60s, sensed that the “Big Swainson’s Day” had arrived sud-



denly and unexpectedly. By mid-afternoon, the movement of small mixed kettles of buteos was steady. Franklin's Gulls and Double-crested Cormorants were in the air in excellent numbers as well — their kettles occasionally held raptors. The sight of a Sharp-shinned Hawk kettling with cormorants is a bit odd-looking!

The "deluge" hit on 27 Sep just before dusk as kettle after kettle of Swainson's Hawks poured past. One towering tornado of more than three hundred hawks was observed by Mark Orsag and Chad Graeve from the Prairie Overlook. It was mostly composed of Swainson's Hawks, but also contained numerous Broad-wingeds, Turkey Vultures, and Red-taileds, several Sharp-shinneds, and an Osprey. Two much smaller one-species kettles of 30 to 40 Swainson's Hawks swirled around it — a truly impressive sight! By the time the final few birds trickled through as the sun set, the 2004 season's best flight had ended. Recorded were 1,383 total raptors and vultures of 13 species. Highlights included four Mississippi Kites, three Merlins, and four Peregrines, along with 1,026 Swainson's Hawks, 4,602 Double-crested Cormorants, and 1,902 Franklin's Gulls.

Another excellent day followed. Jim Meyer spotted a monster kettle of 350 Swainson's Hawks over the Missouri River valley late on the 28th. Despite slackening winds, Phylisha, Jerry, Jim, and numerous visitors had enjoyed an excellent day even before that. Highlights had included a Red-shouldered Hawk and two Merlins. By the end of the day, counters had recorded 862 raptors and vultures of 11 species. The nonraptor push was led by Blue Jays (1,100) and Double-crested Cormorants (380). Another strong flight took place on the 29th when 306 more raptors and vultures of 11 species moved south past Hitchcock. Rarities were not very rare on this day with two Northern Goshawks, a Merlin, a Krider's Red-tailed Hawk, and a *Prairie Falcon* among the day's finds. Things finally slowed just a bit on the 30th, when continued light southeast winds produced 137 raptors and vultures of 12 species.

September had been an outstanding month, but October too would start with a bang. A powerful Canadian front rolled through on 1 Oct, dropping temperatures more than 15 degrees throughout the day. Clouds remained for most of the day, but strong northwest winds gusting up to 40 mph created powerful updrafts and, for the first time in 2004, shivering hawk watchers. Fourteen raptor species were recorded that day with no less than four species — Swainson's Hawk (402), Red-tailed Hawk (184), Turkey Vulture (133), and Sharp-shinned Hawk (102) posting triple-digit flights. The total flight of 879 raptors also included Merlins (3), Red-shouldered Hawks (2), and Peregrine Falcons (2). Red-tailed and Swainson's Hawk color morphs were much in evidence as well with Krider's, Harlan's, and Western dark-morph Red-taileds, and both dark and rufous Swainson's Hawks seen. The nonraptor flight was also heavy and varied: Double-crested Cormorants (1,514), Franklin's Gulls (1,530), and Blue Jays (2,200) led the way with other notables being two late Common Nighthawks and three Great Egrets. In some ways, the day's flight resembled that of 27 Sep, with streams or kettles of gulls, cormorants, and raptors using updrafts under cloudy conditions and directly over-flying watchers. While the volume did not quite match that of the 27th, the streams of birds were lower, affording many good if brief looks as the birds glided quickly overhead with the strong tailwinds pushing them.

The temperatures rose the next two days with sunny conditions and light or variable winds prevailing. Nevertheless, the birds continued to flow; 144 raptors and vultures were seen on the 2nd, and strong movement of Red-tailed Hawks (189) and Turkey

Vultures (150) dominated a flight of 490 raptors and vultures of 10 species on the 3rd. Blue Jays continued to dominate the nonraptor flight with another 2,500 counted on the 3rd. Raptor flights slowed between the 4th and 7th as temperatures remained steadily in the 60s and 70s. Light winds and sunny skies on the 4th and 5th were followed by clouds on the 6th and 7th. Raptor counts averaged less than 50 birds/day. The most notable event of the span was the spectacular if distant passage of an estimated 16,000 Franklin's Gulls over the Missouri River valley (mostly in a two-hour period in the late afternoon). Kettles and streams of birds appeared to form nearly an unbroken chain over perhaps ten miles!

Between 8 and 11 Oct, temperatures remained mostly in the 70s despite passage of the backside of a weak low pressure system and a weak Pacific cold front. Raptor/vulture flights topped 100 birds on all four days including two rare triple-digit flights on east-southeast winds. A last late push of Turkey Vultures dominated these flights which were neither terribly diverse nor notable for rarities, though a Merlin was seen on the 9th, and a record late Mississippi Kite on the 10th. The nonraptors moved in greater numbers with the Pacific front with a good, if greatly diminished, showing by Franklin's Gulls (458) and an early push by American Robins (850) on the 10th and Common Grackles (1,100) on the 11th. A Great-tailed Grackle was picked out of a flock of robins and Red-winged Blackbirds at the Prairie Overlook on the 10th with a Northern "red-shafted" Flicker a fly-by at the lodge that same day.

The 12th through the 16th brought a series of slow-moving Pacific fronts and five straight days of northwest winds. After a slow start on the 12th, the birds responded with four straight days of triple-digit movement, with the best flight of 289 birds of eight species occurring on the 13th. The expected "monster" Red-tailed day never materialized though with solid steady numbers prevailing. Red-tails dominated the flights, which were once again hardly laden with "good birds." The 16th, however, did bring the season's first Rough-legged Hawk and yet another Red-shouldered Hawk. American Robins and American Crows now dominated the nonraptor flights with a strong showing for Common Grackles (6,000) coming on 14 Oct.

Conditions during the next few days (17 to 21) were highly unfavorable with prevailing easterly or east-southeast winds, and (at times) fog, overcast, and drizzle. Just 133 migrating raptors and vultures were seen during the entire period. Nonraptor flights during this time were light as well. A low pressure system followed by a weak cold front brought a more favorable weather pattern from the 22nd through the 25th.

Warming temperatures and southerly winds on 22 and 24 Oct were followed by northerly winds and falling temperatures on the 23rd and 25th. On the 22nd, with Chad Graeve, Sue Mattix, Phylisha Eshelman, Jim Meyer, and Clem Klaphake off in Des Moines receiving the Governor's Volunteer Award, a flight of 92 raptors and vultures of five species took place at Hitchcock — the highlights were two Merlins. Northwest winds of 13 to 20 mph the next day brought a flight of 161 raptors and vultures of nine species with two more Merlins and a late Peregrine Falcon accompanied by a strong push of 4,260 American Crows. Steady southerly winds the next day brought no additional warmth, but once again "channeled" migrants into the Loess Hills as the path of least resistance. Raptors totaled 151 for the day; ten different species were sighted with three Golden Eagles, two *Prairie Falcons*, and one Rough-legged Hawk as the highlights. Red-tailed Hawks dominated this flight with a count of 151 (including two Western dark morphs and a Krider's). The nonraptor flight was heavy volume and diverse with passer-

ines such as American Robins (3,500) and American Crows (1,535) joined by nine other passerine species along with geese, ducks, pelicans, cormorants, and gulls. Light northerly winds the next day brought a somewhat different mix of raptors with Red-taileds, Northern Harriers, and Sharp-shinned Hawks dominating an eight species/156-bird raptor flight. The 25th saw the passage of the “bird of the season” — a first-ever Hitchcock Gyrfalcon (a gray-morph adult) seen by Jerry Toll from the Prairie Overlook.

On 26 Oct, however, the “bad pattern” of easterly winds and cloudy wet weather returned with a vengeance. Just 42 migrant raptors were seen during the three days between the 26th and the 28th. Nonraptor flights virtually shut down as well. A Golden Eagle found by Phylisha and Jerry Von Ehwegen on the 26th was the lone highlight of this wet and gloomy stretch. The sun reappeared on the 29th, and gusty south-southwest winds whipped over the deck as temperatures climbed to the upper 70s. *Omaha World Herald* staff writer Julie Anderson arrived with her crew to begin work on a story on the Hitchcock hawk watch that would appear in the *Herald* (with accompanying photos) on 2 Nov under the title “Eyes on the Flyway.” The 29th saw a flight of 84 raptors of six species including a Golden Eagle. American Crows pushed into the headwinds in strong numbers with the day’s total reaching 3,900. A Pacific cold front packing 15 to 35 mph northwest winds plowed through on the 30th. It produced a Red-tailed-dominated (147) raptor flight of 190 hawks and eagles of seven species. Of the Red-taileds, no less than six were Harlan’s or Western dark morphs. The nonraptor flight was dominated by American Crows (4,820) and was also notable for eight (late) Black-bellied Plovers.

Halloween has been a good luck day at Hitchcock during the years — there have been a number of excellent flights of raptors and some memorable rarities such as the Ferruginous Hawk of 31 Oct 2002. In 2004, the Halloween raptor flight was eminently forgettable — only 84 birds of five species with a decent showing by Northern Harriers (22) being the only remotely notable feature. Nonraptors, however, made 2004’s Halloween their day. The early morning featured two varied rivers of birds — one over the Missouri River valley and one nearer the lodge — that were truly impressive. At least twenty-one species, ranging from Great Black-backed Gull to Black-bellied Plover and House Finch were represented. Common Grackles led the way with an estimated 13,620; American Crows (9,530) and American Robins (6,800) also moved in big numbers. Watching a stream of crows and robins that contained the odd Northern Harrier, small flock of Cedar Waxwings, or scattered and oddly nighthawk-like (in terms of flight action) Black-bellied Plovers made for a unique and quite unforgettable Hitchcock Halloween after all!

November started out with four slow days that produced a total of only 174 raptors and one excellent day that produced a total of 218. The excellent day was the 2nd, and it was notable not only for the great looks as the birds passed overhead and low on the moderate 4 to 15 mph north winds, but also for being the day that the 10,000 raptor mark was finally reached at Hitchcock. Shortly before noon, Phylisha Eshelman and Jim Sinclair spotted an adult Red-tailed Hawk over “the knoll.” Before the 2nd was over, Don Paseka, Phylisha, Jim, Jerry Toll, and Pat Williams had recorded seven raptor species, established a new single day record for Northern Harriers at Hitchcock with a count of 42, and counted more than 25,000 southbound nonraptors of thirteen species (mostly crows, icterids, and starlings). What would, however, become ever more notable for non-raptors as November progressed was the near absence of waterfowl. This is usually the

month when Snow Geese “fill the skies” at Hitchcock. With moderate temperatures prevailing throughout Nov in 2004 though, these birds reportedly lingered long in the Dakotas and then filtered slowly south on a more westerly track that mostly bypassed Hitchcock and DeSoto National Wildlife Refuge. Almost equally amazing was the relative dearth of Mallards.

In fact, conditions were so mild that even the passage of a weak Pacific cold front on 6 and 7 Nov barely dropped high temperatures into the sixties. The passage of the front was accompanied by sunny skies and light westerly and, later, northerly winds. This was enough to spur a two-day push of raptors with 114 on the 6th and 204 on the 7th. Red-taileds (67) shared the air with Northern Harriers (26) and Bald Eagles (15) on the sixth — two Golden Eagles were the day’s highlights. Two more Golden Eagles and two Rough-leggeds were seen on the 7th with a strong count of 160 Red-tailed Hawks supplemented by a good early push of 33 Bald Eagles. Nineteen species of nonraptors were headed south as well — 21,000 Red-winged Blackbirds and 10,000 Common Grackles leading the way. Other notable nonraptors on the 7th included two Bonaparte’s Gulls, a Northern “red shafted” Flicker, two Hooded Mergansers picked out of a flock of Mallards, a Northern Shrike that alighted briefly on “the knoll,” and 28 kettling Sandhill Cranes. The next three days were once again cursed by the now familiar “bad pattern” of wet cloudy weather and east to southeast winds; collectively, they produced only 34 migrant raptors.

A Pacific cold front finally dropped temperatures into the 40s on 11 Nov, but it packed very weak north winds of 2 to 6 mph. The sun was out though and 142 raptors of nine species were recorded. Bald Eagles now took the lead with a flight of 55, followed by Red-taileds (50), Northern Harriers (16), and Sharp-shinned (10). Phylisha, Jerry Toll, Clem Klaphake, Don Mass, and Bob Fuchs also enjoyed a good day for rarities including a Red-shouldered Hawk, a Northern Goshawk, two Golden Eagles, and an American Black Duck (the day’s nonraptor highlight) picked out of a small flock of Mallards. Six straight days of easterly or southerly winds followed with a count of 35 migrant raptors on the 13th being the “highlight” of this rather grim stretch. Another Pacific front popped through in the afternoon on the 18th, briefly raising hopes and bringing 40 total raptors and a record tying day for *Prairie Falcons* (2). The late afternoon push on 20 mph northwest winds (with cloudy skies) also brought a Merlin and several thousand Red-winged Blackbirds — with an isolated flock of 70 Brewer’s Blackbirds the nonraptor highlight. The front initially proved too weak to push through the warm wet air mass to the south though, and the 19th brought rain, fog, and a “skunk” of a day with no migrating raptors. A male Purple Finch hanging around the feeders near the lodge was the day’s “star” attraction.

The front finally moved through on 20 Nov; northwest winds of 10 to 15 mph were recorded at the lodge with a high of 40 and partly cloudy conditions. Bald Eagles (46) and Red-tailed Hawks (44) responded in nearly equal numbers. Among the 115 raptors of nine species that came through that day were a Rough-legged Hawk, three Golden Eagles, a Merlin, and a very late Peregrine Falcon. Nearly 5,000 Snow Geese headed south, with three Ross’s Geese sprinkled in among the southbound flocks. An intriguing smallish gull, mixed in with a tight formation of larger Ring-billed Gulls, provoked much debate and speculation but, in the end, remained a mystery. Two unremarkable days passed with migrant raptor counts in the 30s on light southerly winds. On the 23rd, partly cloudy conditions prevailed in the early morning and afternoon, with northeast winds at 3 to 10

mph and a crisply seasonal high of 36 degrees. Only 52 migrant raptors were seen that day by counters Phylisha Eshelman, Mark Orsag, John Mancini, and Don Maas, but the day's tally included some very notable birds. A light-morph immature *Ferruginous Hawk* observed at length by Mark and Phylisha was followed just five minutes later by a close-in adult Northern Goshawk. Another adult goshawk followed later in the day. A strong flight of 63 Bald Eagles spearheaded a flight of 93 raptors of five species the next day with temperatures in the mid-30s, sunny conditions, and light north winds giving the birds some southward incentive. The rest of the month proved extremely raptor poor though as southerly and easterly winds prevailed. Even the advent of strong northwest winds on the 27th failed to move many birds.

December began with a very steady push of Bald Eagles; winds were light and thermals powered the daily flights. From the 1st through the 4th, counts averaged 46 Bald Eagles/day with no other species logging even one double-digit daily total. On the 4th, counters Sue Mattix, Sandy Reinken, and Phylisha Eshelman saw 31 eagles in the air at once — moving south in two kettles. Nonraptor flights during the four-day span were mostly light with a late push of Common Grackles (5,000) and Red-winged Blackbirds (3,000) on the 1st being the one exception. Flights between the 5th and 11th were more varied with decent flights of eagles alternating with birdless days. Temperatures remained stubbornly in the 40s, and there were few waterfowl (other than a flight of 6,200 Snow Geese on the 7th) to be seen. The arrival of a cold front with 10 to 45 mph northwest winds on the 12th pushed through 54 eagles (53 Balds and a Golden), and a surprisingly high total of 32 late-moving Red-taileds. More than 7,000 Snow Geese and 12,000+ European Starlings were rocketed south by the strong winds as well. A classic “echo” flight of 23 Bald Eagles, eight Red-taileds, 745 Snow Geese, and 1,000 starlings followed on the 13th as the northwest winds shifted to the north and weakened to 5 to 20 mph. After that, the season mostly sputtered to a close in a not unexpectedly slow way. There were one or two last big surprises left in the year though. A pair of Townsend's Solitaires was first found on the 14th and was seen sporadically around the Hitchcock Nature Center during the next week. On the 18th, Hitchcock scored its first-ever triple-digit December flight as gusty northerly winds swept a season-high 88 Bald Eagles past counters Sandy Reinken and Mark Orsag — 11 Red-taileds, one Rough-legged, one Sharp-shinned, and one Golden Eagle rounded out the day. As the skies darkened and the winds howled, an increasingly cold Sandy Reinken tallied the last three eagles of the day. That made 102 raptors for the day — a new first in a season of firsts. Of the Christmas count on the 19th, the less said the better. It was finally cold — really, really cold. Temperatures in the morning were well below zero and the sun simply could not warm counters. Other than starlings and robins, few birds were active. The highlights at Hitchcock were a Hermit Thrush and one of the solitaires. Phylisha, exercising the counter's privilege, closed the watch on the 20th in somewhat warmer conditions.

The “thank you list” is a long one this season. It certainly starts, and rightly so, with the Hitchcock Nature Center staff (Brett Ford, Chad Graeve, Phylisha Eshelman, Tina Pospson, etc.). The “Hitchcock regulars” also deserve more than a few words of praise — their dedication was once again “above and beyond the call”! Thus, Jerry Toll, Sue Mattix, Clem Klaphake, Jim Meyer, Mark Orsag, Don and Janis Paseka, Don and Shirley Maas, Jori How, Pat Williams, Loren and Babs Padelford, Carr Heaney, Sandy Reinken, and Mary Kramer all deserve thanks and acknowledgment of their dedication. Thanks also go out to Dave Cuthrell, Dennis Henriksen, Carolyn Sanderman, Doc and Isolde Cutshall, Bill

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#### RAPTOR FLIGHT TOTALS

Hours: 694

Species seen: 20

Individuals counted: 11,953

Birds per hour: 17.2

#### SPECIES ACCOUNTS

**Black Vulture** (0). The bird seen in 2002 remains the only record for this species at Hitchcock.

**Turkey Vulture** (3,074). This was a new season record. Passage rates remained more than 4.0 birds/hour for the second year in a row (i.e., for both full coverage seasons). The peak flight was early and shallow with 161 on 19 Sep. The late date was fairly typical with a lone individual seen on 2 Nov.

**Mississippi Kite** (16). Given that this was a fairly wet year, we expected it to be a down year for kites. We were wrong. Year 2004's flight logged real and passage rate increases over 2003's flight of nine birds. Time to throw out or revise some drought related theories — maybe we are now seeing evidence of northward range expansion and migration is less dependent on northward post-breeding dispersion in late summer? Early date for this fall was 19 Aug (3), the peak flight of four took place on 27 Sep, and the Iowa record late bird was spotted on 10 Oct.

**Bald Eagle** (947). This was a new season record. In 2003, 908 birds had been recorded. Passage rates, however, fell slightly from 1.4 birds/hour to 1.3, making this year something of a wash in terms of any identifiable trend. The peak flight of 88 on 18 Dec was pretty typical for a mild year like 2004. Atypical in 2004 were the "early birds." The first of these on 27 Aug established a new early date for this species during the fall hawk watch.

**Osprey** (184). Wow! This was a new season record and then some. The old season record of 82 had been established back in 2000. The old day record (36), set that same year, was challenged on 12 Sep (35) and then eclipsed on 23 Sep (39) during 2004. Obviously, increased coverage hours have helped boost totals since 2000 (when only 305 hours were logged), but passage rates were well above average this year (even though many more unfavorable hours are now covered). Weather conditions in Sep may well have helped as prevailing southerly winds funneled these

updraft-favoring raptors into the Loess Hills. We may also, however, be starting to see the results of widespread reintroduction programs for this species in the mid-western United States. The early date of 14 Aug was typical, but the late date was a surprisingly early one of 6 Oct.

**Northern Harrier** (344). This was a new season record. The Northern Harrier posted very favorable numbers this year including a new single-day record of 42 on 2 Nov. The comeback of this species at Hitchcock, after abysmal years in 2001 and 2002, continues as passage rates reached levels in 2004 that have not been seen since the much more selectively-covered 2000 season (see above). Early date was 19 Aug (2).

**Sharp-shinned Hawk** (1,086). This was the first time that these little raptors broke through the 1,000-bird barrier in a single Hitchcock season. Early date was 27 Aug (3) with a typical peak flight of 102 on 1 Oct. Passage rates have remained fairly steady at about 1.5 birds/hour during both full coverage seasons (2003 and 2004).

**Cooper's Hawk** (273). This was a new season record as this species rebounded nicely from a very poor 2003 season. Despite the slightly greater number of hours logged in 2004 over 2003, passage rates, as well as real numbers, rose markedly in 2004. Per hour rates increased from 0.27 birds/hour in 2003 to 0.40 birds/hour in 2004. The 2004 peak flight of 20 occurred on 1 Oct.

**Northern Goshawk** (9). This was unchanged from the 2003 season and a pretty average count if one considers the last five seasons. Passage rates, of course, were just a bit lower than 2003's given the increase in hours. The early date was 29 Sep (2). Two were seen again on 23 Nov.

**Red-shouldered Hawk** (8). This was a new season record. After a miserable 2001 season in which this species was

absent from Hitchcock's totals, numbers have increased steadily during the past three seasons with passage rates also showing slight but steady increases. This is still, however, a very uncommon migrant at Hitchcock. The early date for 2004 was 25 Sep with the peak flight of two on 1 Oct.

**Broad-winged Hawk** (358). Though this was not a new season record, the rebound for the Broad-winged Hawk in 2004 (after a very poor flight in 2003) paralleled that of the Cooper's Hawk. The early date was a somewhat tardy 4 Sep, the late date a fairly typical 4 Oct, and the fairly average peak flight of 99 was on 27 Sep. Three dark morphs were counted in 2004.

**Swainson's Hawk** (2,230). This was a new season mark for Hitchcock's most spectacular migrant (eclipsing the old record of 1,914 set back in 2002). Like the Cooper's Hawk and the Broad-winged Hawk, this species's numbers surged in 2004 after a low count in 2003. Passage rates for the Swainson's Hawk also increased dramatically in 2004, climbing to more than 3.2 birds/hour in 2004 after languishing under two birds/hour in 2003. This suggests that, for these three species, which generally peak as Sep turns to Oct, weather conditions during that key time period are crucial to determining how many pass over Hitchcock in any given fall. Early (27 Aug) and late (13 Oct) dates were typical in timing in 2004; the slightly early peak flight of 1,026 (27 Sep) marked the third time at Hitchcock that this species had reached a single-day/four-digit count. Counters identified seven individuals as rufous morphs and three as dark morphs in 2004. These numbers are certainly an undercount due to both the variability of this species and the difficulty of picking such individuals out of large (at times distant) and rapidly swirling kettles.

**Red-tailed Hawk** (3,065). This was one of only three species to post both real and passage rate declines in comparison to the 2003 numbers. In the case of the Red-tailed, the fairly mild weather in late fall probably explains the declines, as many birds probably stayed north of Hitchcock. The peak flight came early this year (3 Oct), and was somewhat shallow (189). As usual, the range of color morphs and subspecies on display was truly impressive — seven Krider's, 25 Harlan's dark morphs and three Harlan's light morphs, eight Western rufous morphs, 33 Western dark morphs, 10 indeterminate dark morphs, and three "intergrades."

**Rough-legged Hawk** (27). This species posted sharp declines after a record-breaking year in 2003. The only thing this year's flight had in common with last year's was that the percentage of dark morphs (4) remained unusually low (12% of flight in 2003 and 11% in 2004). Though this once again suggests a "Western" orientation of Hitchcock's Rough-legged flight, there seems to be no correlation between this orientation and flight volume for this species at Hitchcock. The mild weather probably kept many of these birds to the north of us. The early date was a fairly typical 16 Oct. The very shallow peak count of two was recorded no less than five times in Nov.

**Ferruginous Hawk** (2). This rare species duplicated the 2003 count. Passage rates, of course, declined slightly. Both individuals in 2004 were light-morph immatures. Records of both were submitted to the IOU Records Committee; the 19 Sep bird has been accepted and the 23 Nov bird is awaiting approval. The timing of the bird seen by Phylisha Eshelman and Mark Orsag on 23 Nov was fairly typical, but the bird seen on 19 Sep by Sandy Reinken, Jerry Toll, and Pat Williams was an early-date record for this

species at Hitchcock.

**Golden Eagle** (36). A runaway season record — more than doubling the old season mark of 17 (2002 and 2003) and breaking a pattern of fairly steady numbers that had prevailed at Hitchcock since 1999. The early bird came on 23 Sep. Peak counts of three were achieved three times between 24 Oct and 20 Nov.

**American Kestrel** (123). This species posted a slight real numbers decline and a more significant passage rate decline when compared against the 2003 flight. In fact, one has to go back to 2000 (with less than 50% of 2004's coverage hours) to find a lower fall American Kestrel season total at Hitchcock. The peak flight was a somewhat shallow 17 on 24 Sep. This is the one species that appears to exhibit a fairly apparent pattern of decline at Hitchcock since 1999.

**Merlin** (35). This was yet another season record. Both Prairie and Taiga Merlins were seen during the fall 2004 season. Passage rates also increased slightly, making this a very solid year indeed for Merlins. The early bird appeared on 6 Sep, with the fall peak flight of three occurring on three dates between 27 Sep and 24 Oct.

**Peregrine Falcon** (38). Like the Cooper's, Broad-winged, and Swainson's Hawks, the Peregrine Falcon is a peak late-Sep/early Oct migrant. Like the other three species, Peregrine numbers had been very poor in 2003. The weather must have been right this year, because this species also enjoyed an excellent 2004 season, though the old season record of 42 (2000) was not surpassed. The early date was a rather late 12 Sep (5), with the peak flight of 10 coming a bit early on 23 Sep.

**Prairie Falcon** (6). Another season record. A record early bird (for the hawk watch) found by Loren and Babs Padelford started things off in fine style on



6 Sep. A second Sep individual appeared on 29 Sep with two Prairie Falcon days occurring later on 24 Oct and 18 Nov.

**Gyrfalcon** (1). The first ever sighting at Hitchcock was made by Jerry Toll on 25 Oct. This sighting of a gray-morph adult has been submitted to the IOU Records

Committee and is awaiting approval.

**Unidentified raptor** (91). This number was higher in 2004 than in any past season, but we had more birds this year, and (yeah) there were more cloudy days, etc. That is our story, in any case, and we are sticking to it!

NONRAPTOR FLIGHT

During the course of the fall hawk watch, 135 nonraptor species were seen migrating past or in the vicinity of the Hitchcock Nature Center (Table 1). Some of the better finds included American Black Duck, Northern Shrike, “Red-shafted” and “Orange-shafted” Northern Flickers, Sandhill Crane (28), Black-bellied Plover (18), Willet, Great-Black-backed Gull, Hermit Thrush, Townsend’s Solitaire (3), Spotted Towhee (2), Clay-colored Sparrow (2), LeConte’s Sparrow (2), Brewer’s Blackbird (70), and Great-tailed Grackle.

Overall, the nonraptor flight as opposed to the raptor flight was below what we have come to expect. A very poor flight for Snow Geese and other waterfowl, a paucity of warblers around the watch in Sep, a fairly weak icterid migration, and a fairly weak flight for a range of common species (Great Blue Heron, Common Nighthawk, Red-headed Woodpecker, Chimney Swift, Cedar Waxwing, Yellow-rumped Warbler, Eastern Kingbird, and Purple Finch) definitely left counters with more time to appreciate passing raptors!

Common species defying the overall trend and posting average or above average flights included American White Pelican, Double-crested Cormorant, Franklin’s Gull, Ring-billed Gull, Blue Jay, American Crow, Eastern Bluebird, American Robin, and

**Table 1. Top 23 species peak flights for the most common and/or countable annual nonraptor migrants**

Species	No.	Peak flight date
Great Blue Heron	8	1 Oct
American White Pelican	6,894	25 Sep
Double-crested Cormorant	4,602	27 Sep
Canada Goose	650	27 Nov
Snow Goose	7,550	12 Dec
Ross’s Goose	6	27 Nov
Northern Pintail	125	1 Oct
Mallard	100	7 Nov
Franklin’s Gull	16,000	4 Oct
Ring-billed Gull	604	2 Nov
Common Nighthawk	10	1 Sep
Red-headed Woodpecker	90	1 Sep
Chimney Swift	1,200	24 Sep
Blue Jay	2,500	3 Oct
American Crow	9,530	31 Oct

**Table 1 continued from page 39**

Species	No.	Peak flight date
Eastern Bluebird	220	31 Oct
American Robin	6,800	31 Oct
Cedar Waxwing	150	12 Dec
European Starling	12,500	12 Dec
Eastern Kingbird	73	19 Aug
Rusty Blackbird	1,000	22 Nov
Red-winged Blackbird	21,000	7 Nov
Common Grackle	13,620	31 Oct
Purple Finch	16	7 Nov

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# Waterman Creek Meets the Little Sioux River

*Lee A. Schoenewe*

One of the most unique places in all of northwestern Iowa is the confluence of Waterman Creek and the Little Sioux River in the southeastern corner of O’Brien County. The steep riparian valleys associated with these watersheds are unusual in the prairie pot-hole region of Iowa, but these land formations do result from the same glacial forces that created the lakes and marshes of this area.

The last glacier affecting Iowa about 12,000 years ago changed the flow of the Little Sioux River. Prior to that it flowed east as part of the Mississippi River watershed, but after the glacier it was diverted to the west and became part of the Missouri River system.

As the glacier retreated, an ice dam broke releasing water from a huge lake that had formed where the town of Spencer is today. The rushing water cut a new channel, steep and scenic, south and west to present day Peterson, Cherokee, and Smithland, where the new Little Sioux River connected with the Missouri River floodplain.

Today, the riverside habitats where Clay, O’Brien, Cherokee, and Buena Vista counties come together are associated with the Little Sioux River and Waterman Creek, plus many smaller watersheds draining into them like Henry Creek and Dog Creek. These draws, ravines, and valleys create attractive habitat for birds, and a number of parks and public areas provide good access.

**Wanata State Park** (Figure 1.1) across the river from the town of Peterson in Clay County is a large tract of wooded river bottom containing many large black walnut trees. The habitat attracts a number of species not expected in northwestern Iowa including Cerulean Warbler, Pileated Woodpecker, Red-shouldered Hawk, Scarlet Tanager, Blue-gray Gnatcatcher, and Kentucky Warbler.

A couple of miles south of Wanata is **Buena Vista County Park** (Figure 1.2), which displays excellent oak savannah habitat as the prairie meets the woodland edges. I remember experiencing a flight of Swainson's Hawks so large over this area that I resorted to lying back on a picnic table to save my aching neck while watching them.

In Cherokee County, the **Martin Access Area** (Figure 1.3) is a county park along the river with wooded ridges and valleys that attract bird life. This park also has two large stands of mixed conifer trees. These pine groves can be counted on to harbor good birds, especially in winter when the road is closed, and it takes a pretty good hike to get to them and check them out. Both crossbill species, Barred Owl, and Northern Goshawk like these pine microcosms.

**Waterman Prairie** (Figure 1.4) is in Waterman Township in the very southeastern corner of O'Brien County. This township has the most land in public ownership due to the substantial watershed and valley of Waterman Creek intersecting with the even larger Little Sioux River valley. This creates a confluence of the two waterways that maintains open water through the coldest winters. Eagles and humans and all manner of living creatures are attracted there. It occupies a place of natural power.

From the point where it intersects the Little Sioux River, the Waterman Creek bed and valley are now under public ownership. There is protection for a full 1.5 miles north thanks to a recent acquisition by the Nature Conservancy. This unique riparian habitat will be managed for the benefit of birds and other wildlife, and will provide enjoyment to humans who value rich and interesting natural environments.

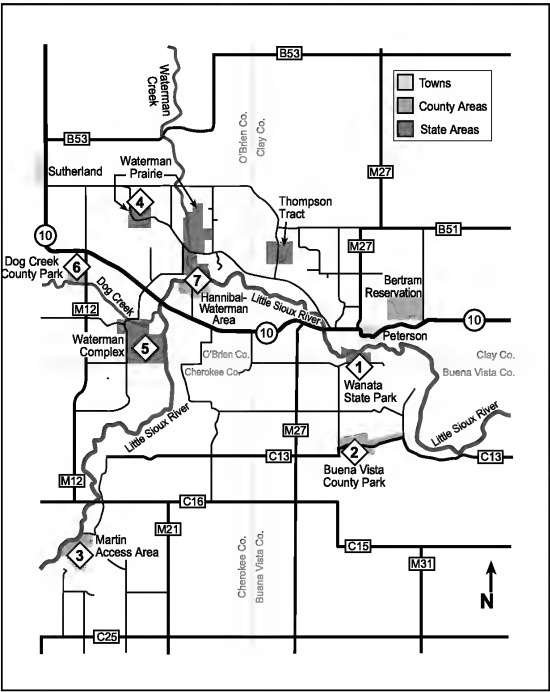


Figure 1. Waterman Creek and Little Sioux River birding areas: (1) Wanata State Park, (2) Buena Vista County Park, (3) Martin Access Area, (4) Waterman Prairie, (5) Waterman Complex, (6) Dog Creek County Park, (7) Hannibal-Waterman Area.

Down river from the confluence, major tracts of native prairie have been preserved and grasslands restored as part of the **Waterman Complex** (Figure 1.5). Grasshopper Sparrow, Bobolink, Lark Sparrow, Sedge Wren, Upland Sandpiper, and Eastern Bluebird all benefit from these areas. The size of the tracts and additional public/private management of grasslands in the area could even portend the nesting of Northern Harrier or Short-eared Owl.

The one significant body of water in the area is the human-made lake at **Dog Creek County Park** (Figure 1.6). Associated habitat has been known to attract Bell's Vireo. This area also has seasonal camping and sleeping cabins managed by the O'Brien County Conservation Board.

Native oak savannah prairies are still found in many places on the steep hillsides that line the watersheds throughout the area. Too steep to be tilled or cropped, and steep enough even to be free from heavy grazing pressure, these grasslands survived the onslaught of mechanized agriculture that decimated other tall grass prairie habitat.

Suppression of fire on these valleys by humans did change natural events, however. Originally, the prairie fires were started by lightning and also promulgated by Native Americans. Left behind were hills of prairie grass interspersed with burr oak trees, which were about the only woody plant species that could consistently survive the periodic prairie fire events. Eastern red cedar trees also were native to the area, but they would have survived only in the draws and other protected areas. The fires killed the cedars in open areas and early settlers called them "prairie candles."

Now that fire has been absent for over a hundred years, red cedars have grown out of the valleys to cover many of the hillsides. Although bad for the native grasses, this has been good for the birds, especially the winter birds. The cedars provide shelter and food in the form of berries. Waterman Creek runs fast and is spring fed, which keeps open water year around. These three vital ingredients allow many different birds to survive harsh northwestern Iowa winters.

Throughout the winter, this area harbors American Robin, Cedar Waxwing, Eastern Bluebird, Purple Finch, and Northern Flicker. As you might expect, an area attractive to



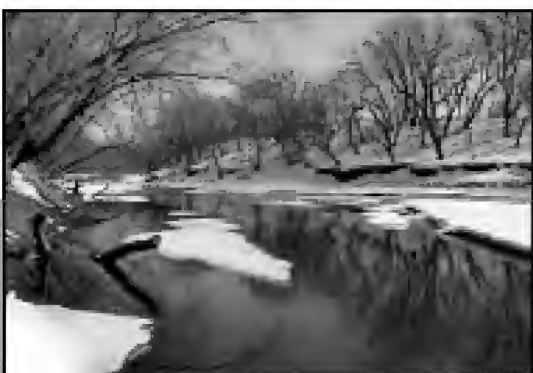
*View to northwest from future site of Prairie Heritage Nature Center overlooking the Little Sioux River valley in O'Brien Co., 21 Feb 2004. Photograph by Lee A. Schoenewe.*



*Dick Bierman (left) and Gary Grange at annual eagle watch at Hannibal-Waterman Area, 21 Feb 2004. Photograph by Lee A. Schoenewe.*



*Looking north along Waterman Creek valley from confluence with Little Sioux River, 21 Feb 2004. Photograph by Lee A. Schoenewe.*



*Open water downstream on Little Sioux River from confluence with Waterman Creek, 21 Feb 2004. Photograph by Lee A. Schoenewe.*

these species also holds the potential to attract the rarer cousins in these bird families.

Bohemian Waxwings have been found hanging out among the flocks of Cedar Waxwings. Mountain Bluebirds also have been seen cavorting with Eastern Bluebirds, and in one case in the spring of 2000, a male Mountain Bluebird tried to pair with a female Eastern Bluebird in this area. Townsend's Solitaires apparently find the area reminiscent of the juniper canyons of the west where they reside. They have been found regularly in the Waterman area in the fall and winter as they wander east exercising their vagrant tendencies.

When there is an abundance of smaller birds in such habitat, accipiters also are attracted. Both Sharp-shinned Hawks and Cooper's Hawks hunt the area and Cooper's Hawks have been found nesting. Bruce Morrison, who has lived on an acreage along Waterman Creek for only a couple of years, has had Northern Goshawks on two separate occasions hunting winter birds attracted to the feeders in his yard.

The ridges and valleys of the area attract migrating raptors and hold them through the winter. A fall hawk watch, held on a single day in late September over the past six years, has produced good numbers and a variety of hawks, falcons, and eagles. More thorough and consistent survey work through the fall season such as that occurring at the Hitchcock Nature Area hawk watch site could provide very interesting results.

In January 2004, Darwin Koenig and I were running an eagle survey along the Little Sioux River. In addition to the dozen Bald Eagles we expected to see, we found two Golden Eagles. The first, an immature, was shooting through draws and skimming along ridges of the river valley. It would extend its talons and grab at sticks on the ground like they were prey. It would then flare up in the air, drop the inanimate object and repeat the game once again. The bird seemed to be practicing its hunting skills.

The second Golden Eagle was a beautiful adult sitting in an open field. It flew up and along Waterman Creek and soared away over the opposite ridge. Based on sightings over the past five years, these valleys and this area would appear to draw and hold Golden

Eagles through the winter months and be a consistent winter location for them in the state.

Rough-legged Hawks in winter, Red-shouldered Hawks occasionally in summer, both Broad-winged Hawk and Swainson's Hawk flights in migration, and all of the subspecies of Red-tailed Hawk are drawn to the area. The valleys of Waterman Creek and the Little Sioux are host to buteos in abundance.

Falcons, too, hunt the area. Not only are Peregrine Falcons seen in migration, but Merlin and Prairie Falcon have shown up in this winter wonderland for raptors. The Gyrfalcon found injured in March 2001 in rural O'Brien County was suspected in two earlier sightings from the Waterman area that were unable to be confirmed.

In 2005, the O'Brien County Conservation Board anticipates breaking ground for the Prairie Heritage Nature Center. This facility will be located on 40 acres of native prairie on a hillside facing northwest near the confluence of Waterman Creek and the Little Sioux River. The location is one mile north off Highway 10 at the end of Yellow Avenue and incorporates the **Hannibal-Waterman Area** (Figure 1.7) next to it.

It will offer a commanding view to the north up the valley of Waterman Creek. The Little Sioux River flows from the east and wraps its scenic valley around the hillside as it captures the current from Waterman Creek and then curves south toward Cherokee County. A facility at that location will be a boon to birders and nature lovers.

The habitats associated with Waterman Creek and the surrounding Little Sioux River valley are good for birds and thereby attractive to birders. I invite you to put this destination on your short list of birding hotspots in Iowa and I hope someday to see you there.

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## Harlequin Duck at Saylorville Reservoir

*Aaron Brees*

On the afternoon of 12 January 2004, I visited Saylorville Reservoir in Polk County to check the last of the open water. The lake was entirely frozen except for a distant hole, visible from the pullouts on top of the dam. This hole held a large number of Canada Geese and Mallards, plus approximately seventy each of Common Goldeneye and Common Merganser, along with single digit counts of Snow Goose, Redhead, Lesser Scaup, American Black Duck, and Northern Shoveler.

After having scanned the length of the hole several times without seeing anything unusual, I caught a quick glimpse of a small, brown, diving duck as it flicked open its wings and dove. The behavior of opening the wings when diving is unique to scoters, Long-tailed Duck, and Harlequin Duck among divers that occur in Iowa, so it immediately drew my attention. After several minutes of not being able to relocate the bird, I finally got a second brief look which revealed a small, dark duck with a white area around the base of the bill and a well-defined, round, white spot toward the rear of the head. The

duck continued to be elusive, making long dives and disappearing among the hundreds of other birds present. Eventually the bird stayed up for an extended view that allowed me to sketch it and take detailed notes (Figure 1). The bird was smaller than a Common Goldeneye with a fairly steep forehead, a short, stubby bill, and a rather long tail, which it occasionally cocked up above the water's surface. Except for the white markings on the head, the bird was a solid brown color and did not show any white in the wings when diving. The round white spot toward the back of the head is a feature seen only in Harlequin Duck, making this a relatively easy identification given a sufficient view. The bird was clearly not an adult male, but beyond that, the views were too distant to determine whether it was an adult female or an immature. I attempted to contact local birders, but was unable to reach anyone who could get to the lake before dark. Fortunately, the bird was still present the following day and was reportedly even cooperative, at times sitting on the ice at the edge of the hole. It was last reported (although not documented) on the morning of 14 January (Cecil 2004). Bitter cold and wind arrived that day, causing many of the divers to depart, apparently including the Harlequin.

This is the third accepted Iowa record of Harlequin Duck. The two previous records are of specimens taken in Polk County on 27 December 1932 and 31 October 1976 (Kent and Dinsmore 1996).

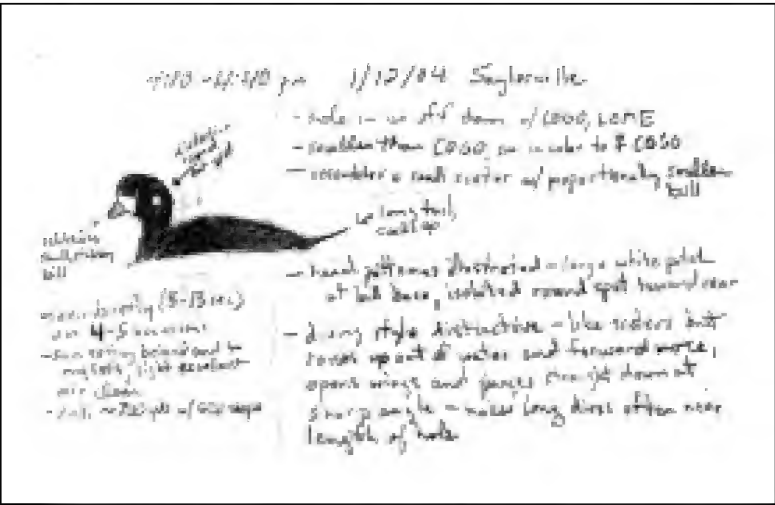


Figure 1. Sketch and notes created by Aaron Brees at time of Harlequin Duck sighting, Saylorville Res., Polk Co., 12 Jan 2004.

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Kent, T. H. and J. J. Dinsmore. 1996. *Birds in Iowa*. Published by the authors, Iowa City and Ames, Iowa.

# Snowy Plover at Hawkeye Wildlife Area

*James L. Fuller and Thomas H. Kent*

It was mid-morning of the Johnson County spring count day on 8 May 2004 as we pulled along Greencastle Avenue in the Hawkeye Wildlife Area of the Coralville Reservoir and immediately spotted a very light shorebird on an adjacent mudflat. Telescope views revealed a foraging alternate-plumaged Snowy Plover. Interestingly, this was the exact location where a Piping Plover, first thought to be a Snowy, was discovered in August 2003.

Generally the bird was lighter and slightly smaller than the nearby Semipalmated Plovers, and much smaller than Pectoral Sandpipers in the area. The underparts were snow white, while the upperparts were very light gray, which would suggest it was the expected Gulf Coast subspecies, *tenuirostris*, as opposed to the darker west coast subspecies, *nivosus*. The dark legs were relatively long and thin. The bill was also dark, thin, and quite short. The head and face showed three black markings. There was a post-auricular spot (more like a smudge) posterior and inferior to the dark eye, but which was in contact with the eye.

There was a brief, but fairly thick collar patch on the side of the neck, and a dark bar across the top of the crown, which was not continuous with the eye. The only other species with which this bird could be confused is Piping Plover. However, in breeding plumage, the Piping Plover contrasts with a two-toned orange-black bill, orange legs, a much more complete black neck and/or breast band, lack of a post-auricular spot, and a dark crown bar that is continuous from eye to eye.

Snowy Plover has worldwide distribution in tropical and temperate areas, and in Europe it is known as the Kentish Plover. In North America, it winters on the Gulf and Pacific coasts, where some of the birds continue as breeders. The remainder migrate relatively short distances to their breeding grounds on alkaline flats in the southern Great Plains and Great Basin. This bird was likely an overshoot of the Great Plains breeding area. Of the ten previous Iowa records, all were in spring, late April through early June, and six of them were during the first ten days of May. The last sighting in the state was in 2000.

The bird was seen throughout the day on 8 May by many observers, but was not present the following day. It is interesting that a Snowy Plover had been reported about a week earlier at Otter Creek Marsh in Tama County.

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# King Rail in Johnson County

Bob Dick and James Huntington



King Rail, Hawkeye Wildlife Area, Johnson Co.,  
14 May 2004. Photograph by Jay Gilliam,  
Norwalk, IA.

During the evening of 11 May 2004, James Huntington and I decided to check the Hawkeye Wildlife Area for shorebirds. While scanning with a spotting scope to the east of Greencastle Avenue (north of Swan Lake Rd.), I saw a fairly large rusty colored bird about 200 yards away along the edge of the vegetation.

I could not immediately identify the bird and was concerned that it would disappear into the vegetation, so I quickly asked James to look at the bird. His first comment was that it was a Virginia Rail. Then immediately the bird took flight and James excitedly exclaimed, "It's too big — it's a King Rail"! The bird, after a short flight, landed in an area about the same distance away from where we had first seen it; however, it was hidden by vegetation.

We very much wanted a better look at the bird, and discussed walking (slogging through the mud) to try to find it. James expressed concern that this would not be successful as the bird would likely hide or flush. An additional problem was that the light was poor as it was partly cloudy and the sun would set in about 15 minutes. James suggested that we use a tape to attempt to call the bird in.

After playing the King Rail call several times the bird flew toward us and landed about twenty feet away. The rail exhibited aggressive behavior and appeared to be trying to locate the "other rail" vocalizing "kek" and "grunt" calls.

This was a large rail with a decurved bill longer than its head. The upper half of the head was gray. A superciliary line was noted. The breast and anterior portion of the belly were orange and the flanks were dark with vertical white barring. The upper parts were mostly brownish. The tail was short and uplifted. We identified the bird as a King Rail (*Rallus elegans*) based on size, features, coloration, and responsiveness to the King Rail recording.

We then called several local birders and Chris Caster and Jim Fuller arrived soon thereafter and also identified the bird as a King Rail. Numerous other birders saw the rail in the following days and it was well photographed and documented.

King Rail in Iowa is noted as "Regular; nests" and a rare migrant and summer resident reported most commonly from late April through July, with fewer fall records and one winter record (Kent and Dinsmore 1996). Most reports are from areas near the Mississippi river or from the prairie pothole region of northcentral and northwestern

Iowa. However, sightings of King Rails have not been reported through IOU channels since 1999. In 2001, the Iowa status of the King Rail was changed from Regular to Casual.

Kent, T. H. and J. J. Dinsmore. 1996. *Birds in Iowa*. Published by the authors, Iowa City and Ames, IA.

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## **Sprague's Pipit in Hancock County**

*Rita Goranson*

A Sprague's Pipit was found at the north end of Eagle Lake in Hancock County on 5 May 2004. I had been checking three marshes weekly for rails and bitterns, hoping for a King Rail. Early on this Wednesday morning, I was at the northeast corner of Eagle Lake, which is marsh bounded by a pasture that has very short grass. The pasture has tussocks near the edge of the marsh.

My first glimpse of the pipit was when it was on top of a tussock in the pasture. Then the bird worked its way down to the ground level and was skulking around the tussocks. Its large white disc area around the eye was very evident as was the tan face and off-white mustachial mark. The crown was dark and streaked. The white throat had fine streaking under it. There were two noticeable wing bars and dark streaks on the back of the bird. The legs were pale but pink/orange in color. It seemed to be a lone bird.

I went to my car to get a camera to photograph the Sprague's Pipit that later was accepted as a second state record. When I returned to the area where the bird was, I could not relocate it. The sighting of a Sprague's Pipit was a serendipitous sighting and it will stay with me for a long time.

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## **Black-headed Grosbeak in Iowa City**

*John P. Bollenbacher*

On the afternoon of 1 May 2004, I was birding the oxbow lake just south of Highway 6 in southern Iowa City near the Iowa River. The day was warm, with a high of 61 degrees, and the skies had gone from clear sunshine to partly cloudy with high, thin clouds.

So far, I had seen, among the bushes on the south side of the oxbow and the surrounding trees, several Blue-gray Gnatcatchers (it seemed like they were everywhere),

some Baltimore Orioles and a Brown Thrasher. At about 3:15 PM, I saw an orange and black bird, which I almost dismissed as another oriole, but then quickly noticed that it was a grosbeak from the short, stout bill.

Through the binoculars, I could see that the orange wrapped around the face, but in a bit more of an arc and slightly wider than the painting in my Peterson's *A Field Guide to the Birds* showed. The orange also formed a collar around the bird's neck, as well as a rump patch. The breast was not entirely orange, but also had a roughly v-shaped patch of yellow at mid-breast, from which point on it was white to buff. The head and eyes were black, with no obvious eye-ring. The wings were black with white patches and the tail, which appeared somewhat notched, was also black. I also noticed that the bill, which had made me realize it was a grosbeak in the first place, was two-toned; it was darker above than below. My inescapable conclusion was that I was looking at a male Black-headed Grosbeak.

I was able to observe the bird for about five minutes, with and without my Denali 7x32 binoculars, from no more than 20 feet away but usually closer. During this time, various sections of the bird were highlighted as they showed through the vining bramble in which it kept hopping in and out. All the while I was consulting my Peterson's, making notes and a quick if somewhat crude sketch of what represented to me the bird's prominent fieldmarks.

After recovering from the surprise of seeing something I assumed was at least a casual bird in Iowa, I continued down the Iowa River Trail to Napoleon Park. There I found an Ovenbird foraging on the ground amid some broken trees and bracken about 30 feet west of the picnic shelter. Shortly after that, undoubtedly more to my surprise than its, I flushed a Little Blue Heron on the Iowa River bank at the southern extremity of Napoleon Park. It flew down river a few yards and disappeared.

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## **Fifty Years Ago in Iowa Bird Life**

*James J. Dinsmore*

The December 1954 issue contained several substantial articles. The lead article was by longtime IOU member and bird bander Myrle Jones. Jones presented data from 21 years of banding on the number of "typical" and Gambel's subspecies of White-crowned Sparrows that he banded in Iowa. Although the data were limited, Jones suggested that the relative abundance of these two forms might merit further study. Such a study has not been done, and the topic is one that might interest current birders.

An article by Ward Tanner and George Hendrickson discussed the nesting ecology of Virginia Rails at the Dewey's Pasture area in Clay County. The article contains some detailed information on nest placement, nesting success, and similar topics, data that are still useful today.

Finally, the IOU Committee on Bird Distribution, chaired by Woody Brown, published a distributional checklist of Iowa birds. The checklist presented information on the status of Iowa's birds in each of nine regions of the state. Although now outdated by more recent information, it does provide some interesting information on Iowa's birds. I noticed that the list included seven species that were considered extinct in Iowa in 1954 including American Raven, Eskimo Curlew, Passenger Pigeon, Louisiana Paroquet (=Parakeet), Trumpeter Swan, Whooping Crane, and Eastern (=Wild) Turkey. I have seen the latter three of those species in Iowa in the past few years.

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## **Fifty Years Ago in Iowa Bird Life**

*James J. Dinsmore*

Much of the March 1955 issue consists of the summary of the 1954–1955 Christmas Bird Count and a membership list. A total of 21 CBCs were held in Iowa. The high count was 62 species at Cedar Rapids; both Davenport and Des Moines had 60 species. A Marsh Wren at Des Moines and 15 Pine Grosbeaks at Dubuque and one at Pine Hollow State Park in Dubuque County were the most interesting birds found.

The feature articles included a study of summer birds at Springbrook State Park and a summary of Blue Grosbeak reports for Iowa. As expected, most of the grosbeaks were found in western Iowa, but at that time it was considered a very rare species in the state. A brief summary of the status of longspurs in Iowa by William Youngworth noted the rarity of Smith's Longspurs in Iowa. Among the notes is a compilation of fall warbler sightings at Webster City by Dennis Carter.

The only book reviewed is A. W. Schorger's detailed study of the demise of the Passenger Pigeon, which had just been published. Long out-of-print, this classic has recently been reprinted and still contains much useful information.

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# Board Meeting of the Iowa Ornithologists' Union

9 January 2005

The IOU board meeting was held at the home of Vice President Sharon Stilwell in West Des Moines. President Richard Tetrault called the meeting to order at 12:10 PM. In attendance were Richard Tetrault, president; Sharon Stilwell, vice president; Robert I. Cecil, secretary; Tammy Hertzell, treasurer; board members Jay Gilliam, Sue Spieker, Linda Zaletel; and Ann Johnson and Hank Zaletel.

**Secretary's Report.** The minutes were approved as published in *IBL* 74(4).

**Treasurer's Report.** Tammy Hertzell reviewed the Statement of Cash Flows, comparing the total assets of \$61,065 for Dec 2003 with the total assets of \$62,799 for Dec 2004, indicating a net increase in assets of \$1,734. It was noted, however, that life memberships need to be amortized and Certificates of Deposit (CD) interest recorded. The board thanked the treasurer for her excellent report.

**Registrar's Report.** Membership information was provided to the board by Registrar David Edwards, who could not attend. To date, 145 of 394 paying members had renewed their membership.

## COMMITTEE REPORTS

**Publications Committee.** Ann Johnson provided a report of 2004 expenses, noting that in some years *IBL* Editor Kay Niyo's bills for the last issue are paid in the following calendar year but generally reflect the cost for the year of publication. Expenses for *IBL*, the *IOU* News, the listserv, and the Iowa Birds website totaled \$12,592. Income from the IOU board allocation of \$12,000 and other sources totaled \$14,176, and there was \$4,286 in the Publications Enhancement Fund. It was noted that the total cost of Publications Committee services per member was \$28.17.

**Records Committee.** Ann Johnson reported that a new checklist will be published as soon as the 2004 records are completed. Several changes in species status are expected, and two species are being considered for inclusion to the state list. The committee is also taking bids for the publication of the new checklist.

**Membership Committee.** Sharon Stilwell reported on behalf of John Rutenbeck that IOU membership pamphlets had been sent to each of the Christmas Bird Count compilers so that they could distribute them to participants. *IBL* Editor Kay Niyo also sent President Tetrault a copy of a Colorado message detailing the benefits of membership for possible use by the IOU. Sharon suggested that the IOU post a similar message on the IOU listserv.

**Projects Committee.** Jay Gilliam reported that Chris Caster had agreed to serve on the committee, and that Jane Clark had resigned. One additional member is needed to com-

plete the requirement for five members. The announcement of the proposal to make the Projects Committee a standing committee, and a statement of purpose, appeared in the *IOU News* 20(4). Adoption of this amendment will be considered at the spring meeting on 13–15 May in Indianola. President Tetrault recommended that the committee members serve staggered terms beginning in 2007. President Tetrault also brought a calendar produced by the Iowa City Bird Club as an example for possible replication by the IOU, noting that there were numerous photographers who might contribute photos.

There was also discussion about the Iowa bird photo compact disc which is currently being reproduced and distributed by Jim Schieb. Jim expressed his desire to have the IOU handle their distribution in the future. It was proposed by Sharon Stilwell that this be done, and Hank Zaletel offered to handle the distribution. Regarding duplication and postage costs, Tammy Hertzelt said that she could reimburse them in a manner similar to that of other sales items. It was proposed by President Tetrault that 50 compact discs be purchased, and that Hank should work with Tammy regarding the budgeting of costs.

**Finance Committee.** President Tetrault asked Treasurer Hertzelt about her findings regarding the possibility of using financial instruments other than CDs for holding IOU funds. She reported that the websites of T. Rowe Price and similar funds were not easily understood and that it was difficult to determine which of the many funds offered the best value and/or return to the organization. Noting that she was an accountant and not an investment advisor, she suggested that this be explored by an ad hoc committee of members knowledgeable about these matters. Several discussion items followed, such as whether the funds should be invested in an environmentally friendly fund, whether they should be loss-proof, and whether the funds could be immediately available. President Tetrault noted that losses can be prevented by investment in a fixed income fund. The board thanked treasurer Hertzelt for her excellent report.

**Trip Committee.** Bob Cecil reported for Ric Zarwell on the recent trip to Minnesota and on proposed trips for 2005 and 2006. Treasurer Hertzelt reported on income from the 2004 Kirtland's Warbler trip to Michigan (none) and the Minnesota trip (\$275). In response to a letter from Ric Zarwell detailing expenses and his understanding of the use of trip profits, she remitted the profits to the Iowa Audubon Society for use by the Important Bird Areas project. President Tetrault stated his opinion that the use of the proceeds from this trip should have first been approved by the IOU board. Discussion also included whether standards should be proposed for trip leaders and participants, whether proceeds should go to the general fund or to the projects committee, and the need for detailed guidelines for future trips to be adopted by the committee. Ann Johnson distributed an example of such guidelines and agreed to work with Bob Cecil to develop them for IOU trips.

To provide operating funds for Trip Committee expenses, it was moved by Linda Zaletel and seconded by Sharon Stilwell to establish a petty cash fund of \$250 that would be reimbursed upon receipt of billings. All ayes, motion carried.

It was also moved by Tammy Hertzelt and seconded by Linda Zaletel that all funds and billings from IOU trips be submitted to the IOU treasurer. All ayes, motion carried.

## UPCOMING MEETINGS

Vice President Stilwell reported that the spring 2005 meeting will be on 13–15 May at Indianola and that Ann Johnson, Jay Gilliam, and Jim Sinclair are serving as the Meeting Committee. The fall meeting will be on 23–25 Sep and Lee Schoenewe is making arrangements. Robert Ridgely is scheduled to be the keynote speaker. For the spring 2006 meeting, she is looking into Clear Lake, with Tammy Hertzell working on a specific location. Possible locations for future meetings were discussed, such as Shenandoah and southeastern Iowa. President Tetrault thanked Vice President Stilwell for her work in arranging successful meetings.

## OLD BUSINESS

Tammy Hertzell asked who had been responsible for submitting tax statements, noting that Rita Goransen suggested that she ask the board. The board was unable to provide any information. Tammy Hertzell will research this question.

## NEW BUSINESS

**Records Committee New Member.** Ann Johnson reported that the Records Committee proposed that Paul Hertzell be named to a six year term. Linda Zaletel so moved and Sharon Stilwell seconded. All ayes, motion carried.

**Budget Proposal.** Tammy Hertzell discussed the budget proposal for 2005, directing the board's attention to the Statement of Revenues, Expenses, and Budgets. She noted that the 2004 budget, approved on 15 May 2004, was for \$16,620 and actual revenue for the year was \$16,510. Expenses for 2004 were \$14,775 for a net surplus of \$1,734 (to be adjusted for life membership amortization and CD interest).

**Silent Auction Consignment Items.** During the budget discussion, it was explained by Bob Cecil that some items provided to the silent auction were provided on a consignment basis, and wondered how this should be handled in the future since some members might think their entire bid was going to the IOU. It was moved by Bob Cecil and seconded by Sharon Stilwell that consignment items would continue to be accepted but with the caveat that their status as consignment items be clearly stated to bidders. All ayes, motion carried.

**Possible Dues Increase.** Ann Johnson reviewed projections of revenues from a possible dues increase which would total about \$910 per \$5 of increase. This takes into account only the Goldfinch members since all others are already above the proposed \$25 minimum. This also presumes that no members would drop their memberships. Discussion followed, including the potential for membership loss, the fact that the actual cost for member services is now \$28.17, that many members already contribute in excess of the basic membership, that a smaller incremental increase now is preferable to a large increase later, and that the exceptional quality of the publications makes the membership cost a much better value. It was decided that a \$5 increase in basic dues, from \$20 to \$25, would be brought up for discussion at the spring meeting. Any increase in dues would begin no earlier than 2006. President Tetrault also felt that a calendar might offer an additional incentive for members to maintain their membership. The cost of such a calendar was discussed, and it was decided that additional research was needed.

**2005 Budget.** Tammy Hertzel reported that she had received requests from the various committees for \$15,600, which was less than last year. Several modifications in the proposed 2005 budget were made, bringing the total proposed budget to \$17,000. Linda Zaletel moved and Sue Spieker seconded to approve the proposed budget. All ayes, motion carried.

**Projects Committee and DNR Workshop.** It was reported that Chris Caster had been appointed to the Projects Committee, and that Jay Gilliam had agreed to represent the IOU at the IA Department of Natural Resource's Comprehensive Fish and Wildlife Planning Workshop during Jul 2004.

**Nominating Committee Report.** President Tetrault reported that the Nominating Committee consisting of Mark Proescholdt, Jim Sinclair, and Ric Zarwell has met, with the following slate proposed: Sharon Stilwell for president, John Rutenbeck for vice president, and Jim Fuller and Ric Zarwell for 2-year board terms and Mike Dooley for a 1-year board term to fill John Rutenbeck's remaining term.

**Life Memberships.** There was discussion regarding the fact that Luther College has a life membership in the IOU. Because colleges do not typically die, this has the potential of being a perpetual commitment. President Tetrault will write them a letter telling them that their life membership will expire at the end of 2005. A member also queried whether it was possible to continue making payments on a life membership that was initiated prior to the decision to end such memberships. It was decided to allow the member to continue the payments and to allow the life membership.

**Contributions.** In response to a contribution that did not come through the registrar, Tammy Hertzel agreed to write a letter to the contributor for tax purposes, and also agreed to work with the registrar to establish procedures for acknowledging such contributions.

**Trip Evaluation Form.** Bob Cecil agreed to work with Sharon Stilwell to prepare an evaluation form for the recent Minnesota trip.

**Audit.** Tammy Hertzel will make financial records available for an audit.

**Adjournment.** Sue Spieker moved and Jay Gilliam seconded to adjourn the meeting. All ayes, motion carried. The meeting was adjourned at 3:00 PM.

Respectfully submitted by Robert Cecil, secretary





*Le Conte's Sparrow, northern Warren Co.,  
10 Oct 2004. Photograph by Jay Gilliam,  
Norwalk, IA.*



*Cooper's Hawk, Pioneer research fields in  
Johnston, Polk Co., 5 Nov 2004. Photograph  
by Jay Gilliam, Norwalk, IA.*



*Black-crowned Night-Heron, Hawkeye  
Wildlife Area, Johnson Co., 24 Sep 2004.  
Photograph by Jay Gilliam, Norwalk, IA.*



*Snow Bunting, Dubuque Marina, Dubuque  
Co., 27 Nov 2004. Photograph by Jay  
Gilliam, Norwalk, IA.*



*Yellow-throated Vireo, Pinchey Bottoms, Marion Co., 28 Aug 2004. Photograph by Jay Gilliam, Norwalk, IA.*



*Black-bellied Plover, Runnells Overlook, Marion Co., 22 Aug 2004. Photograph by Jay Gilliam, Norwalk, IA.*



*American Golden-Plover, Runnells Overlook, Marion Co., 18 Sep 2004. Photograph by Jay Gilliam, Norwalk, IA.*



*Marsh Wren, county wetlands south of Cumming, Warren Co., 28 Sep 2004. Photograph by Jay Gilliam, Norwalk, IA.*

**ANNUAL MEMBERSHIP DUES** (renewable yearly): Fledgling (students) \$15, Goldfinch \$20, Bluebird \$35, Oriole \$50, Egret \$75, Osprey \$100, Bald Eagle \$250, and Peregrine Falcon \$500+. Additional family members, \$4 per person. Membership dues entitle members to receive *Iowa Bird Life* and *IOU News* quarterly and to vote and hold office in the Union. Contributions are tax deductible to the extent allowed by law. Send subscriptions, membership payments, back issue requests, or address changes to David C. Edwards, 2308 State Avenue, Ames, IA 50014 (Dave@dandje.org).

**INSTRUCTIONS TO AUTHORS:** Original manuscripts, notes, letters (indicate if for publication), editorials, and other material relating to birds in Iowa should be sent in Word or WordPerfect to the editor. Research manuscripts will be sent for peer review. Submission of material should be by e-mail attachment or IBM-formatted 3.5" diskette; alternatively, by mail, typed or handwritten.

Photos and graphics: Submit photos and slides as TIFF (\*.tif) images or as high resolution JPEG (\*.jpg) images in e-mail attachment, on CD, or 3.5" diskettes.

Send all materials other than seasonal field reports to Kayleen A. Niyo at Kay@KayNiyo.com or by mail to 25100 Sunset Lane, Evergreen, CO 80439. Deadlines for submission are **January 1 for winter issue (No. 1), April 1 for spring issue (2), July 1 for summer issue (3), October 1 for fall issue (4)**. Send seasonal field reports to field reports editors by deadlines listed on inside front cover.

**IOU NEWS:** Paul Hertzelt, Editor, 1432 East State Street, Mason City, IA 50401 (phertzelt@rconnect.com)

**IOU WEB SITE:** <<http://www.iowabirds.org>>, Ann Johnson, Webmaster. On-line resource for rare bird alerts, checklists, site guides, IOU information and membership. Support the IOU through purchases at the on-line IOU Nature Store.

**CHRISTMAS BIRD COUNT:** Deadline for receipt of reports is 15 January. For forms and instructions, contact Christopher J. Caster, 4 South Ridge Ct., Coralville, IA 52241 (cjcaster@earthlink.net).

**IOWA BIRDLINE:** Danny Akers (warbler\_1231@hotmail.com)

**BIRD SIGHTINGS:** Post to ia-bird@lists.iowabirds.org. Subscribe at <<http://www.iowabirds.org/main/list-serve.asp>>

**ADDRESS CHANGES:** Send address changes/membership subscriptions to Registrar David C. Edwards, 2308 State Avenue, Ames, IA 50014 (Dave@dandje.org).

**UPCOMING MEETINGS OF THE IOWA ORNITHOLOGISTS' UNION:** Spring 2005: 13–15 May 2005, Indianola, IA.

DESIGN: Lynn Ekblad, Ames, IA

GRAPHICS: Richard Beachler, Boone, IA



*White-faced Ibis, Banner Wetlands  
complex, Warren Co., 3 Oct 2004.  
Photograph by Jay Gilliam, Norwalk, IA.*

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